

THE PASSING
OF THE WORD

HELEN HENSHAW

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The Passing of the Word

By
Helen Henshaw



1910
THE TORCH PRESS
CEDAR RAPIDS
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227
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THE THRESHOLD

A worker paused one day at the close of its quick-spiced hours to step with triumph over the threshold and into the Beyond. Yet before she went she had found time amidst the stress of burdened days to throw into living colors a picture unretouched — *The Passing of the Word*. A few of those who loved this toiler have sat before the picture and sacredly blended here and there a shade or suppressed an insignificant detail or modified a tone in such a way as it was thought the artist herself would have done. In such a form they give it to the world, leaving the reader at the threshold of the book to find the message of the picture.

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THE PASSING OF THE WORD

CHAPTER I

A REVELATION

It was toward the latter part of a quiet, sunny September afternoon that Marion Mansfield found herself wandering along the pine walk which protected her from the eyes of the college world near at hand, a thing for which she was grateful. For once in her life she had found this pine-carpeted, sweet-scented, and twilight-lighted path deserted, and she could make it all her own. She was hungry for the rest which solitude gives, and on she went breathing deeply and drinking in the present, realizing only that she was being satisfied.

Soon the friendly path had guided her into the glen. Ah, here was her delight! She stopped on the rustic bridge and bent over the clear, trickling waters. There was rest here, for Nature was quieting caressingly her troubled child.

Again she started on her way up the ascending walk, stopping now and then to look at a large tree, for its strength appealed to her, or waiting till a tiny bug had made its way in front of her path. Soon she was in her favorite spot on Sunset

Hill. She found her own clump of pines, and threw herself down on the fresh, clean, soothing coverlet the trees had spread for her. She looked long into the distance toward the southwest. Wonderful Mother Nature had called her apart for awhile, called her apart to know the beauty, the quiet, and to grow! A hush was on everything. She could hear the small low voices of Nature whispering of love, of life.

In the background, yonder, were the Highlands of the Hudson, lying so steady, so sure of themselves, so full of repose, wrapped in the blue veil of haze, and exquisitely graceful in outline. Near at hand were the fields below, distinct in their detail, with evidences of their administrative usefulness everywhere, and still nearer was this little Sunset Hill with its treasures so close that the girl could not only see them, but she could also feel them, breathe them, press them to her heart. Yes, the grass was soft and yielding, the pine needles were filling her soul with their rare, pure perfume—they were comforting; and the trees were majestic, strong, and powerful, her present support. More than this, Sunset rose in its beauty above the neighboring parts, and so afforded this child of its love the enjoyment of all the life around.

Sunset beautiful? Yes, but it could never surpass, never attain to the rare beauty of this dreaming girl. There she lay, graceful, to be sure,—features all but perfect, of course one would always

say so, — eyes that laughed, and hair that must have stolen some of the sunbeams. That sounds well, but still she is not described. Her charm was illusive. She was the merry sunshine wherever she went. The dance of the sunny light was in her laugh, her talk, her very self. She was only a sophomore this year in old Exmoor College, but she had made a very sure place in the hearts of the girls, both of those who knew her and of those who did not, for to look at her as she went along the corridors or through the campus was to look at courage, cheer, and happiness. To think of her as separating herself from companionship was strange; but to know that she actually went away from people to seek solitude was still stranger. That Marion was very unhappy, that she wanted to be alone, that she was ever longing, hungry for something that she did not have, was an absolute contradiction to her looks, for she was the life of any circle into which she came. A happy song, a jolly laugh was always ready. The seniors often came in quest of her to help them out when they were trying to entertain some dignitary in that privileged domain they called the Senior Parlor; and whenever she had a solo, or other part in the Glee Club concerts, it was almost as good to see as to hear her.

Could it be possible there was a part of Marion Mansfield's nature she did not share with everybody? Ah, yes, a very deep part, though she by no means realized the depths now, for it was a part

she had scarcely shared with herself, as yet. As she lay there looking, thinking, Nature was telling much, bringing out in itself many qualities she longed for: peace, repose, and confidence in itself and its purpose, power and strength. It was sympathetic and trying to give of itself to her. Why could she not take its gift? Why was she so restless? Why was she, also a child of Nature, not fulfilling her life-purpose as truly as every tree that grew, with all its beauty, its cool shade, its fruitfulness, as truly as every chain of Highland, busy in its producing, nourishing hillside? What was there in her that would fit her for a home-life with Gene? Nothing, that she could see, but laughter and merry-making. Dear old Gene, what did he see in her that he loved so devotedly? It was easy to know why she cared for him: his nature was so big and open, so full of earnest impulses and generosity. All his life seemed a gift to help solve the problems around him, from the condition of the little newsboy to the demands of larger civic interest. Although older and more reserved than herself, nevertheless he had drawn her irresistibly to him by the strength of his love. But what was she giving to him that was worth while, and what was she giving to her college friends all about her, and again, what was she gaining for herself? Nothing, it seemed to her, but a vapor of fun! And would fun last forever? What was the matter, anyhow? Why was she so discontented,

lately? She always had been happy, particularly since Gene had come into her life; why shouldn't she be so now? With this uncomfortable question in her thoughts, she gave her foot a little, impatient poke at a stone and sent it whirling down the slope. On her thoughts ran, keeping fair pace with the rolling stone.

"I wonder if other girls are ever so unhappy as I? Do they ever seem useless to themselves? If I could only do something! But oh, I get so tired of laughing! Everybody expects it of me; and, if my heart were breaking, I'd have to laugh to keep up my reputation." Here a tear or two rolled down her cheeks, and a forced little laugh came as she thought of the way Gertrude Wayne, a good friend, had come to her the night before after dinner and asked what in the world was the matter that she had been so sober. She had given the expected laugh in reply, saying that she had to be quiet once in a while to hear other people laugh.

"For goodness' sake!" was the response, "don't take that notion very often. There was a regular pall over the whole table. All we lacked was the 'tomb-stone pudding'. Pity we didn't have it!"

"Why, Gertrude! I didn't know I was so woefully sober," she had said.

"Well, you were; and Marion dear, you know we always look to you to keep up our spirits."

So it had gone; and her friend had left her,

reasonably contented when Marion had assured her over and over again that nothing dreadful had happened and that she was not ill.

Once more a laugh came to the surface as she thought, "The trouble is — I don't know what the trouble is! I guess my guardian spirit must have decided it was time for me to settle down a bit, and so here I am settling, settling; but it goes mighty hard, and what's the use of it all, anyway? Pshaw!" And with this she jumped up, shook herself, and walked over to the path to go down the other side. She got a glimpse of the Catskills, many miles in the distance. They were as balm, and she forgot herself for a moment in the enjoyment of the far away mountains.

"Hello, happy Mary!" called a jolly voice. "We've been looking for you everywhere. What are you doing?"

"Just out for my constitutional, getting some inspiration to go back and tackle that history."

"We are thinking you are pretty late. It will soon be dinner time. Come on with us, won't you?"

Could it be possible that she had been there so long? It had seemed but a moment to her, and she hurried to join her discoverers.

"We've been having the finest walk over to Sunrise!" her friend continued. "We're planning to go over there this week, if we can ever get up early enough, to see from this mighty hillock the

marvelous sunrise they talk about. Go with us, you and Clara Louise, and we'll have one of the times of our lives. But are you all alone? How queer! Who ever heard of your taking exercise all alone?"

"It happened there was nobody around when I started, and I thought I'd try it once, but I'll surely hunt you up next time;" and with a ripple of laughter she went on down to the campus with them, chatting lightly of this and of that.

As Marion came along the corridor to her room, after leaving her companions, she was hoping that no one would be there, not even her room-mate, for she wanted to think a bit and have half a chance to collect herself. She had been so startled by meeting her friends on Sunset that she had felt unnatural all the way back, though they had not suspected anything unusual in her mood. Her hope for a few moments of composure was all in vain; for she found a lively trio in her room — her room-mate and two seniors.

Immediately when she opened the door, one of the seniors spoke up: "Well, Marion, it seems to me we have been waiting forever."

"Oh, I am so sorry, Mabel. Patience is good for the soul. What is it?"

"We have a dreadfully sober man to look after, between chapel and eight-fifteen, when his old lecture begins. You see that leaves us forty-five long minutes to fill in. We are going to trot him down

to the Senior Parlor and we want you to come over and sing to him to cheer him up, you know."

"Of course I will," answered Marion with her usual readiness to help out.

"He is going to lecture to us on some old archaeological subject, you know, and he's horribly devout," laughed Mabel's companion.

"Yes, he is," put in her friend, "and that's just why we've come after you, my love, — because we knew you could sing something light and jolly and we wouldn't mind it a bit to shock him a little with our frivolty. I'd like to see how a smile would look on his face, anyhow. Sing him a love song, do, Mary dear. He needs it, I know he does."

Marion laughed, but little did they know how close the tears were, and how it cut her to feel that people looked to her for nothing more than just this. It was the same thing over and over, day in and day out; but what else had she to give them? It was of course natural that they should come to her as they did. All this flashed through her mind as she sat there apparently listening to their talk. And what did she want to give them, she asked herself. The answer was a blank. She did not know. Why had this sudden and peculiar longing come to her? Perhaps it was the inspiration of Gene's life. She was not sure. He was always doing things for the fellows. At last, as the girls started away, she assured them that she would be on hand with something.

After chapel Marion went over to the Senior Parlor. She stood by the piano looking over some music when the girls arrived with their guest. She watched him as they took him about explaining to him that this was the sanctum of the seniors who enjoyed making their friends at home within its treasured walls. They continued walking around the room telling him of the different gifts of pictures and other interesting furnishings that made it quite their personal possession, for so it was, since no other than a senior dared cross its threshold without invitation. Marion shrank from him as she noted his critical attitude.

At last they came up to her and introduced her. One might suppose that as he looked at her he was taking her along with the list of "curios." The girls thought they detected a shade of interest in his face; but they were not sure. The warm-hearted girl, as she took his stiff hand, felt a chill and thought, "Oh, dear! can I ever put anything into song with that man near?"

It was hard for her to decide what to sing first, but she chose a piece that would make her forget herself most; so she turned to one of her beloved flower songs. She had never been able to talk her heart-thoughts out, but she could sing them. She sang three flower songs straight through without stopping, forgetting all else. At the end of the third, she turned to find the man at her side looking intently at the music.

“That was beautiful! Thank you!” he finally said.

Marion was relieved to hear the bell ringing for the lecture. As she got up, the girls came to her expressing their appreciation, and one of them whispered, “I never heard you sing quite in that way. You have melted his heart, and he will give us a better lecture, I know.”

She was right. The man had been touched; his lecture had a warmth in it that would have been impossible in the earlier part of the evening.

Those senior girls little realized that they had never heard Marion Mansfield sing like that before, because she had never before had such an afternoon of deliberate questionings and heart growth. These songs had given her the first relief, for it had been rush and hurry ever since she came back. Now she had forgotten all and poured out her soul in the songs to the flower-children who understood and sympathized as no person had ever done. She was the better, the stronger, because of their touch.

CHAPTER II

A TRIP TO MOHONK

Early one October morning there was a very general and an unusual bustle about the college. It was the day for the annual trip to Lake Mohonk, and every senior and freshman was frisking about in happiest anticipations.

It had been the custom for several years for an old friend of the college to give the senior and the freshman classes a day's outing at Mohonk at the time when the autumn leaves were turning into their rarely colored hues. Thus it was that each girl had a chance to visit this wonderful lake twice during her four years' course.

Although Marion Mansfield was a sophomore, she was going this year, since she had not been able to be with her own class the year previous. She was looking forward to a happy day with her senior friends, but more than this, she was anticipating with deepest pleasure spending a day in a place where nature had scattered her charms with so lavish a hand.

Indications were that it would be a perfect day, and about six o'clock the "barges" drove up into the campus to be filled with singing, laughing, chattering girls. The "barges" with four horses were the favorites, and were soon occupied. You may be sure they were taken possession of by the lively freshmen for the most part, who felt that this was one of their first opportunities to show their hustling qualities. In a short time the caravan had started, and the chill of early morning was soon forgotten by those warm, energetic spirits. As they went through the little, sleepy Lansdowne burg, dignity was forced by the chaperoning members of the faculty, but as soon as the party was ferried to the other side of the river, bottled feelings broke loose and merry songs were rampant.

Marion was a senior just for a day, and oh, what fun!

"Come, Mary dear, give us a start, a rousing song. These freshmen are altogether too obstreperous," called some one.

"My, what privileges! To start a senior song!" laughed she. Soon her clear, sure voice began:

"Nineteen — you're a 'dandy,' you're a hale, and
hearty class,
You're a credit to your college, and you've many
a brilliant lass;

May your brains be everlasting, may your health
be ever good,
God bless you, Nineteen —, we all love you as
we should."

"We dub you Mohonk senior, Marion," called out an enthusiast who immediately took her own class-pin off and fastened it on her sophomore friend.

Happy was Marion that day! Her heart was fairly bounding. She was with those whom she knew and loved well, and then she was out of doors with the thought of nothing except the enjoyment of the ever refreshing present.

"I tell you this air is delicious, and nips one's energies keenly," she ventured. "I'm ready for basket-ball or anything else, just now."

They were passing through the pretty low-lying Highlands, and the sun was throwing his fresh morning beams over the brilliantly colored trees, bringing out their delicate tints as well as bolder colors, ranging from the dark green of the pine tree to the brightest reds and yellows of the hard maple.

New Paltz was reached toward the latter part of the morning. Here was a station for replenishing the supplies of pop-corn, peanuts, confections, and other desirables. Six miles more to the goal of all their thoughts! Could they ever wait? Unrest was beginning to be felt. They were getting

nearer and nearer. Finally they began to ascend this northern mountain of the Shawangunk range. It grew more and more steep, and the drivers were obliged to ask the girls to lighten the "barges". Girl after girl jumped out and walked along the winding road.

Marion was one of the first. It had been all she could do to stay in, anyhow; but she had been ashamed to ask to get out, for she did not want to seem sentimental.

Virginia Manning, who was one of Marion's nearest friends, stepped up beside her with, "How do you like it, Marion?"

"Fine!" she answered, but her heart was too full to say more.

"We haven't begun to see the beauty, yet. Look at that chaotically tumbled mass of rocks, yonder; but just wait! We are soon coming to the jewel, the emerald of the mountain."

"You mean the lake?"

"Yes."

"But, Virginia, I never knew you cared particularly for scenery."

"Oh, I don't, except when I come to Mohonk! The views are so superb that I am forced to care for them, Mary dear," she continued, with a perplexed expression coming over her face. "I want to talk with you about something to-day, and when we get a chance to wander off by ourselves, may I? There are so many hidden paths here."

"Indeed you may," responded the girl wonderingly. Her curiosity, however, did not mar her enjoyment of the constant surprises of beauty that nature was crowding upon her.

As they passed on, Virginia remarked, "This crevice here is the Lemon Squeezer. If you wiggle hard enough, and climb persistently enough you'll finally land on Sky Top."

Marion, who was from the middle-states region, and consequently a child of the prairies, stopped and looked at those huge broken rocks with the freshness and keenness of appreciation that can come only with one's first acquaintance with such mammoth playthings of Nature. She was absolutely stilled and awed, almost afraid, before this wild, rock scenery with its hidden, rugged powers; for in place of the lacy mosses and ferns which clothed the river banks of her native surroundings were huge trees and large branching shrubs. Where was the Master-hand that must have thrown these magnificent rocks together in such graceful, fantastic fashion, that wrought those curves of beauty through the giants of the forest?

She was reminded of her companion's presence and possible impatience by a quick, "Come on, Marion!"

That she should have stopped so long was a surprise to Virginia, till she remembered that it was the first mountain that the girl had probably ever seen close at hand.

A suppressed "Oh!" escaped from Marion as she rounded the corner and caught the first glimpse of the lake bosomed in the crest of the mountain.

Where had she ever seen anything like it? It was truly a rare and precious emerald with wonderful coloring put deep and securely in this picturesque rock setting. And the great Jeweler of that gem had provided the shapely treasures of the forest that made upon its clear, liquid surface those fascinating shadowings! Marion was saying little but thinking much, and drinking deeply of the beauty around her.

Although she and Virginia had been quite in advance of the others they now found themselves surrounded by a happy *coterie* of friends. Soon the "barges" neared, partly loaded with weary girls, picked up when easier grades in the road were reached. The guests were greeted at the hotel by their sunny, white-haired friend, Mr. Smiley, with his warm, generous hand-shake, and those who chanced to be near enough for a personal "How do you do?" from him, stepped back with a feeling that a little extra happiness had been crowded into their cup for that day. The world must grow better and happier, the more it comes into contact with such a peaceful, cheery cordiality as that of Mr. Smiley. He turned over the keys of his little citadel of the mountain crest to the Exmoor girls, with much good cheer, and they were not loath to take possession. They seemed to be found in

every nook and corner, as they finally swarmed the hotel and its porches, the boat-house, the walks, and drives. Their luncheon would be ready for them in about an hour, they had been told; and so it was that small companies had scattered in all directions to enjoy the varied scenery, the quiet paths, the rustic look-out towers, the boating, the summit view-points, and the nestling, friendly, quiet nooks.

Marion and Virginia had started up a rather steep, winding, rocky path to Sky Top. Virginia was giving her friend information how she could catch a glimpse of the Green Mountains, see six states and two river valleys, the Rondout and the Walkill, and trace the Hudson from the cliffs, one on each side of the lake. Marion was fairly nervous with excitement. When she arrived on Sky Top she stood motionless, looking at this variety of scenery. Never had she imagined in all her life that there was a single spot where she could look upon so many of the moods of nature; but there she was, admiring the lakelet and its rocky walls, then turning to the other side, noting the fertile little valley near by, and farther beyond, the Hudson and its Highland shores. Riches that she had never known had been filling her life to-day.

It so happened, queer as it may seem, that just at this time nobody else was on Sky Top. For some reason or other the crowd had taken Eagle Cliff, the higher of the two lake sentinels, and Virginia was just beginning her confidential talk with Mar-

ion when a masculine cry of "Help!" pealed out near by. They went to the edge of the rocks where the sound was, and there some feet below, they found a man in a most ridiculous predicament. Looking down the precipice to the Lemon Squeezer they saw in one of the narrowest places of the crevice an unusually robust young fellow; they broke into convulsive laughter as they realized that he was stuck fast.

As the distressed man looked up into these two pretty faces he muttered to himself, "Where in the deuce did they come from?" and dropped his head. He had happened to be the only young person at the hotel that week and to see girls was an overwhelming surprise and embarrassment.

Marion, who had grown up in close companionship with her two brothers, instantly appreciated the situation and soon gained equilibrium enough to call out through her broken laughs, "I'll help you; just wait a minute."

Here college athletic training stood her in good stead as she threw herself flat on the rock as near to him as possible and prepared to pull him out, she had no idea how.

The poor man hadn't a word for himself, and didn't look up once till she spoke a second time saying, "If I can just get your coat off, it will make you a little thinner, and I guess you can squeeze through."

He turned to her the most helpless, sheepish face she had ever seen.

"Excuse me, but I can't help laughing; it is so funny," she explained after she had broken out into another peal of laughter.

In the meantime Virginia, all but trembling with fear, had stood sentinel on top, lest somebody should come and catch Marion in this exploit. It had ceased to be funny to her, during these moments of suspense. She could easily hear herself breathe. She wished right heartily she had not been so anxious for that long-planned advice to her little sophomore favorite, and then she wouldn't have had her off up here alone. Now if any body found it out, Marion would be the target of many jokes from all over the college.

"I'll tell you what to do!" called out Marion. "Put your arms up and I'll try to pull your coat off straight over your head. That's it."

She laughed, and then reaching down took hold of the coat and pulled with all her strength. At first it didn't give one jot, but with another jerk and pull it was torn loose. True, it was a bit the worse for the tugging, but who cared for a few rents and rips. The man, too, did his share of tugging and pulling, in addition to his squeezing and wiggling; and desperate as he was, with the present inspiration from his help above he was able to put on an extra grain of vigor and wrench himself free. Arrived on top, generously purple with embarrass-

ment, he gave his assistant a confused, "Thank you!" and disappeared down the road at a rapid rate. He was barely out of hearing, resolving to himself that he would take his circumference into consideration before he tried that trick again, when Virginia, who was entirely relieved now, shouted to Marion in a stage whisper:

" 'I never saw a purple cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one.' "

"Virginia, he'll hear you!" And Marion, who was scarcely able to control herself, put a restraining hand on her friend.

The wretched man took a side path down, but he kept meeting girls and girls, and more girls. His uncomfortable feelings and appearances were not conducive to happiness, because he ran upon the fair sex at every turn.

"By Jove! where did they all come from? A regular round up! Didn't know there were so many in the whole state! Say, she was a dandy, a perfect little beauty! Wish she could forget I was I, and I could see her again. Reckon they're going to camp here for awhile. Gee! if I could only get to my room without meeting some more of the tribe." So the rescued hurried on, all but overcome with the liveliest curiosity. He swore to himself that he wouldn't put his head outside his door

again that day lest he should meet her. Notwithstanding this, Jack Casey made his toilet in all haste, stuck his pride in his pocket, and rushed down to one of the broad verandas, stationing himself in one of the secluded corners where he could watch. He would just look at her from a distance; that was all. He had managed to edge up to Mr. Smiley and ask what it all meant; when he knew, he waxed more romantic than ever.

Meanwhile, Marion and Virginia had started toward the hotel, as it was nearing luncheon time. They were filled with thoughts of the happenings of the hour. Marion was thinking of how she would write Gene all about it, and of how he would laugh over her brave venture. Little did she know how hard a lesson it had been for him to learn to trust her away from him for the three long years to come, or perhaps she would not have been so happy in bringing this part of her day's experience to him.

Virginia startled her from her reverie with, "He's a handsome fellow at any rate."

"Oh, is he!" rejoined her friend in child-like unconsciousness. She really had not noticed his face, and was not sure that she would know him should she see him two months later.

"Now, don't you know, mistress heroine?" asked Virginia, but this conversation was cut short by the approach of several of their companions.

The crest-fallen Jack saw her come upon the veranda and go in with the others for luncheon. As

a long-drawn sigh escaped him, a dear, little, white-haired Quakeress who had taken him under her protection came up with her knitting, and there was nothing to do but to entertain her with his nonsense; for even quiet little women like at times the spice of nonsense.

In half or three quarters of an hour the girls began to make their presence felt again on the porches, in the boats, and everywhere. Marion, however, did not come out immediately, much to Jack's disappointment, for she had stopped at one of the writing tables in the office to send her mother and Gene greetings from Mohonk. She gave her *fiancé* a jolly "How do you do?" and a brief but graphic picture of her Sky Top adventure as well. Soon she joined her friends on the veranda. To Marion's dismay Virginia was standing there talking to that unfortunate adventurer of an hour ago, and with a wicked twinkle in her eye she called Marion over to introduce her to the same as Mr. Casey of New York City. There was nothing to do but to laugh herself out of the embarrassment, a thing she was quite equal to, and she did it with a right good will. Then she quickly and deftly turned the conversation to the beauties of Mohonk; but somehow, and for some unknown reason, her new acquaintance did not wax enthusiastic that day over Mohonk, though he tried to keep up polite interest. But Marion prattled on, growing more and more uncomfortable and wishing with all her heart that

Virginia would not seem so contented and ready to stay there for the rest of the afternoon; for she wanted to see more of the delightful mountain rambles. Finally she suggested something of the sort and excused herself. Virginia very soon joined her, saying that she had invited Mr. Casey over to Exmoor to see them.

“Us!” ejaculated Marion. “You little imp! What are you up to?”

“He’s a very nice young man. That dear little Quaker lady to whom I introduced you called me to her with, ‘Come here, my dear, and tell us about your day,’ and forthwith she presented me. Poor fellow! he grew horribly red, but I cheered him up, and he was quite at ease, talking like a merry-go-round till you came, and then he lost his head completely, as he had already lost his heart. I tell you, Marion, you have captured him. I couldn’t help asking him over, he looked so lonely when you turned away, you know, and I felt so sorry for him,” said she with a bit of tease in her laugh.

“I wish you hadn’t.” Little did Virginia realize how truly that was said, for she knew nothing of Eugene Whitmore, as did none of Marion’s other college friends.

“But, Mary dear, why are you so sober? We’ll have a lot of fun with him; he’s jolly and you needn’t fall in love with him, if you don’t want to. Please don’t take it so to heart.”

Marion found that she had to join in her

friend's pleasantries, or else share her heart's dearest secret with her, a thing which she felt she could not do now; for she had too many years of waiting before her to speak of that yet.

Marion had another happy hour as she climbed over the rocks and fairly revelled in her surroundings. Then the "barges" were summoned and all the girls gathered for their homeward journey. A farewell was sung to Mr. Smiley, and off they started, a tired, tumbled, but merry lot of young womanhood.

Jack Casey watched the last "barge" out of sight, and then with a leap over the porch railing was off for a long stroll until the evening meal.

"What in the deuce am I going to do about it?" he mused. "That Miss Manning asked me over. Right cordial of her and I'd like to go, but *she* never said a word. Suppose I could go and ask to see them both in a bunch? Of course I couldn't ask to see Miss Manning alone. That wouldn't look well," and he cleared his throat with a satisfied conviction that the only proper way would be to call for Miss Mansfield, even though she hadn't extended an invitation. But another mood took possession of him as she repeated, "Fool, fool, what's the matter with you? You know very well you're an idiot falling madly in love with a girl who fished you out of your trouble; she doesn't care a straw for you. You think you are going to go over there and take her heart by force, do you? Well,

you are a—a—a— daisy, to put it mildly," and he laughed an uncomfortable laugh, resolving that he would go back to New York and to business to-morrow, and forget it. But try as he might, he couldn't throw off the thought of his day's experiences; and there was less sleep for him than usual that night.

For the rest of the day and evening Marion was able to put herself into the life around her, but when bed-time came and she was alone, fears would creep in. Her nature was very sensitive and her sense of honor keen. It gave her a feeling of deceit to think she had not told Virginia frankly of Eugene. She would not have thought any more about this affair, but since her engagement of only three months ago she had tried to be guarded.

The next day, however, brought new thoughts and joys, and she had several days of happy Mohonk memories. She was really enjoying it more since she came back, it seemed to her, as she lived it over slowly and in detail.

In the meantime, a letter had come from Gene that troubled her just a trifle. It was different from his other letters. It seemed a little restrained or something of that sort; she didn't know exactly what. He had said that he had received her Mohonk note, and was glad that she'd had such a glorious time; but that was all he had said about it. Queer! Perhaps he was worried over business. She would have to write more often and cheer him up.

Under the sunny influence of a few of her warm-hearted and encouraging letters Eugene Whitmore became quite himself again, and his answers came back frank and free, and generous as they had always been. So Marion was confident that business had cleared, and all was well again.

CHAPTER III

A CABINET MEETING

Marion fell back easily into the old life of careless fun. The busy days of college work passed quickly enough. Those harrassing meditations of that warm September day had quite gone out of her thoughts. She was once more the "happy Mary" not only in appearance, but also in heart. It was altogether too unnatural for her to sit down often and think about herself. Everything had always been planned for her and would be. Her parents had talked college for her since she was a baby. She had grown up in that atmosphere. Then Eugene Whitmore had come into her life but a few months ago and taken upon himself the plans for her years after college. She always seemed provided for, with nothing to do but to live and to let time bring its pleasures.

In consequence of the troubling thoughts of the past being to all appearances tucked safely out of heart and mind, Marion Mansfield was unusually surprised, one November evening, to find

herself confronting the same questions only in a more definite manner. She had gone over to the chapel service in her usual spirit of gaiety, along with Clara Louise and one or two others. She came up to her own seat with the customary carelessness which grows from habit. As she seated herself and looked toward the platform she grew a bit curious, for there sat beside the president a young woman she had never seen before. It was entirely out of the ordinary to see so young a woman up there. Who was she, and where had she come from? Marion continued to wonder about her. She certainly didn't look like a lecturer; she was too young, not more than four or five years older than she herself was; she liked those eyes; there was such sympathetic, individual interest in them as their owner scanned the faces before her. Marion knew instinctively that she was a friend. She noted different details of dress, and characteristics of manner, but each time she would come back to those eyes which were wonderful in no other particular than in their expression. They seemed to look right through one. She was sure they looked through her, and yet they were so full of an untold love that they never hurt.

Marion grew almost impatient for people to stop coming in so that service could begin, she was so anxious to hear that voice. But all at once the disturbing thought of what if her unknown friend shouldn't be asked to speak, came over her.

That, however, was highly improbable, she told herself. The young woman was on that platform for a purpose. It was only fear that had conjured up such a possibility. She was not disappointed, for the president introduced the stranger as Miss Ruth Holman, National Student Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association, who would take the chapel service that evening. Marion's breath came quickly and yet heavily as Miss Holman stepped forward to the reading desk. She perceived that a woman of a type by no means common stood before the audience. Such grace, such dignity, such ease and a voice so sure, so quiet, and yet so strong, so full of love! More than all this the sincerity, the earnestness of the speaker, seemed to appeal to the very heart of Marion. She knew but one thing: she was looking at, listening to such a woman as she had never even conceived of. She must not lose a single word. Presently the one before her was talking to God, not praying a prayer, but just talking to Him. He must be very near, it seemed to Marion, for she could feel some influence which she could not understand. Miss Holman called Him her friend and her Father over and over, and her heart seemed so full of gratitude to Him for all He meant to her. She was asking so much for all those girls before her, and she seemed to care deeply to have them receive that which she was asking for them. And then before Marion knew it the organ had begun, and people were filing out, she among

the rest. Something in her eyes bothered — an accident; and she brushed it away quickly hoping no one saw. She only knew she had an intense longing to be like the young woman she had just seen.

Before Marion realized her whereabouts Clara Louise had come up with, "That was a fine chapel talk, wasn't it?"

Those words jarred on Marion. They were too trite to apply to such a talk by such a woman, and she only answered "Yes! Let's take a little walk before we go in. It is a glorious night!"

What a relief to get out where she knew her tell-tale face was protected from all questioning eyes! She didn't talk much with Clara Louise, just enough to keep up the conversation on the subject farthest away from her thoughts, an easy thing to do, for Clara Louise talked glibly on any thing that came along. She herself wanted to think, but she couldn't; instead she was silenced completely. The two walked on and on until Clara Louise protested that she was cold and that she must go in to work.

In the meantime Miss Holman had walked over to the Main Building with some of the Association girls. They had told her the number of the room where the Cabinet meeting would be held. She had answered that she would be there very soon, but begged to be excused for a few moments while she went to her room. She entered, closed her door, and there alone before God knelt in quiet assurance

to ask His guidance and wisdom in the coming Cabinet meeting. As she rose from her knees, had one been there, one would have seen evidences of an inner strength, a poise, and a joy, that could have come only from true companionship with God, and one would have known, then, the secret of the remarkable womanhood which had so impressed Marion.

As Miss Holman turned down the corridor toward the room to which she had been previously directed, she was wondering where it was for she realized that she had forgotten the exact number; but she was not long in doubt, for she soon heard peals of laughter and a vigorous babel of voices issuing from a near-by quarter. That particular room was so lively just then that after two or three knockings, which went unheeded, she opened the door with a hearty, "Come in," of her own as well as with an excuse that she could not be kept from the fun any longer. The "Engaged" sign had little terror for her. There was a sudden hush in the room as she appeared in the doorway, and a profusion of apologies as the girls realized their unintentional inhospitality. She was assured and reassured that the austere "Engaged" was only to prevent interruptions from unexpected comers. There was a general scampering to find her a chair and to get themselves seated in some degree of order on the various sofa pillows on the floor and on the capacious couch.

There was almost an accident to the chafing-dish and the pretty tea-table in the hurried confusion, but both were saved by the heroic activity of some one.

As Miss Holman sat down, putting her Bible and note-book on the table, directing a few words to the president and to one or two girls near her, and while subdued voices were completing their previously interrupted and unfinished sentences, she had a chance to note the prettily furnished room she was in; for she, too, was still a college girl in feelings. Things were cosily and daintily arranged. It was a typical college-room, with its couch, tea-table, desks, book-cases, as well as characteristic bric-a-brac; but one unusual feature was the number of small oil paintings on the walls. In response to her inquiry she was told that the father of one of the girls who roomed here had in his home an exquisite collection of pictures, and that he had given some of them to his daughter for the furnishing of her room. There was a Dolph kitten, an orchard girl by Feudel, and two or three other studies that lent to the general refinement and interest of the surroundings.

After a few moments had passed Ethel Stevenson, the president, called the meeting to order, and put it into the hands of the National Secretary. She began with a short prayer in which there was real heart communion, and after that gave a simple, personal message. She held each girl's at-

tention through her quiet strength as she talked of the spiritual fitness of these to whom the work of the Young Women's Christian Association had been intrusted. Each chairman was impressed with the responsibility of leadership. The words, "God and I," rang in the heart of every girl there as Miss Holman asked each one to take that message to herself, with the supplementary thought, "God the power, I the personality." She then asked the question, "Is God able; is God ready; is God willing with the Power?" They knew the only answer was "Yes!" Again she asked each girl to question herself, "Am I able; am I ready; am I willing with the personality?" From this she spoke of prayer as the best way of answering these personal questions. It was a message of mere suggestions — the throwing out of help which must be appropriated by each girl, if she would accomplish her desires with her committee.

The silent, earnest, upturned faces of those girls as they listened, showed that they recognized a power that was other than human in this woman who, they could feel, was not only speaking that message but living it. Her rare spirit filled the room, and with eagerness they seemed to draw closer as she talked. They knew that they were listening to a woman of God, who, with it all, was young and full of the joy of living as well as rich in her sympathy for them and in her understanding of their needs. There was scarcely a dry eye in the

circle as she finished. Why it was so no one could have told; but the speaker left an intense longing in every heart to be stronger and better.

There came a frank and free consideration of their work. Each chairman reported concerning her own committee, and a general discussion followed on the strength and weakness of the whole Association. Miss Holman was appealed to as the doctor for all ailments, and was expected always to have suggestions for the chairman of the membership committee, on how to work up enthusiasm or reach some special type of girl, or for the chairman of the religious-meetings committee about filling the prayer-meeting rooms with people when they were scattered to the four winds; or for the finance committee to get money when there was none to be had; or how to make the social committee more than the source of a yearly function or two; or again, how to put the inter-collegiate committee at work; or once more how to make people get into the Bible classes when they didn't care in the least whether they ever heard of a Bible class or not.

The time for the end of the meeting came all too soon, and after the strenuous hour and a half Miss Holman, very happy but tired, briefly said "Good night!" to the girls and started down the corridor to her room. Her work, however, was not yet finished for that night.

As she neared her room she heard a low, rather

timid voice say, "Miss Holman, may I speak to you just a moment?" As she turned, she recognized the chairman of the inter-collegiate committee though she could not then recall her name.

She answered with a cheery, "Yes, dear, I should be so glad to have you;" and she slipped her hand through the girl's arm with an air that was farthest away from weariness, and that spoke only of interest and encouragement to the girl in whom she recognized a longing and yet a hesitancy to say something. She drew her into her room and there for almost an hour they talked together of the girl's own difficulties and of the new possibilities of her life in and through Jesus Christ.

As the girl looked up into Miss Holman's face with tearful eyes and heart overflowing with gratitude she said, "Oh, Miss Holman, I never knew before that a cabinet meeting, or that a business meeting, could be so full of spirituality!"

Miss Holman had been talking to Alice Murray of the happiness in living, and as she talked, her own sunniness of nature spoke quite as effectively to the girl as the words she was using. She had found that the poor child had been too often looking upon the seriousness of life, and at times had been oppressed with it. What she needed to consider, especially, was the joyousness of things around her and as she turned to say, "Good night," Miss Holman saw in the expression of the girl's face that she had caught a new idea of living and

that she was going out to make it real to herself.

When Alice started away, she said merely, "Thank you so much for it all." But Miss Holman called to her to wait a second. Stepping over to the table and taking a piece of folded paper from a note-book, she slipped the message into the girl's hand as she bade her good night.

With eager steps Alice Murray hastened to her room and opening the paper she found the following incomparable thought which she made her own that night:

"Our lives are songs;
God writes the words,
We set them to music at leisure;
And the song is sad,
Or the song is glad,
As we choose to fashion the measure.

"We must write the song—
Whatever the words,
Whatever the rhyme or meter;
And if it is sad,
We must make it glad,
If sweet, we must make it sweeter."

While Miss Holman and Alice were having their interview, there was busy talking and thinking in the little gathering left in the other room. The cabinet girls discussed the meeting, the new help they had received, and their own discouragements. Almost every girl felt disap-

pointed in herself. Miss Holman had told them that they must not expect to influence the girls and keep them interested except through prayer. That was just what they needed, they all felt. So after a long talk, they held the first prayer-circle. Even in that short time they caught a glimpse of what a preparation it could be to meet the daily difficulties. But this was not the last, for a group of them continued to meet for a few minutes each night.

After prayer, they stayed on and on together, talking of the one they were learning to love so truly. She had brought new life and new courage to them. Louise Horton of the devotional committee shared her enthusiasm as she said, "I know Miss Holman is going to mean everything to us not only among our Association girls, but also among those who are not now interested. As I was coming over from chapel, I heard May Jones say, 'That's the most sensible chapel talk we've had for a long time!' and you know May is never too ready to like religious things."

Then Mary Palmer of the Bible study committee added, "And I heard 'Little' Warren in her own ridiculous way say, 'She's great! Never been in any of those Association prayer meetings in my life but I'm going to hear her; see if I don't! Glad it's Friday or I'd never have time; I'm so very studious;' and the girls made all sorts of fun of her and told her they knew that she could never

be anything but the same little heathen she was. I didn't hear more but I fancy she'll be there, she's such an independent little miss; and I think she was really in earnest though she's so droll and funny nobody ever knows whether she means what she says or not."

"Did you see how perfectly quiet and attentive everybody was while she was talking?" remarked Ethel Stevenson. "I was glad for once that my name began with S so I could sit toward the back of the chapel and see how people liked Miss Holman; and oh, I was so happy! I am just sure we are going to have fine meetings! I am so glad she could speak in the chapel first!"

"Prexy liked her too, did you notice?" asked Sarah Shepard. "She was so direct and spoke to the point without waste of time, and he likes that, you know."

"I suppose it's awfully frivolous to mention, but I think she's mighty good to look at as well as to hear," laughed Helen Meyers, of the social committee.

"My! But weren't her suggestions good! She's so terribly practical," put in Milfred Morton. "I feel as if I could raise a hundred dollars tomorrow, though lately I haven't felt good for a hundred cents. I wish we could keep her right here all the time, but I suppose we ought to be grateful for these few days. There's one thing: she's full of fun. I sometimes wish sober people

were the other side of nowhere, but I suppose that wouldn't do, either. I'm going to ask her over to the basket-ball game to-morrow morning. I know she'd enjoy it; she looks like it."

"I guess we've taken up every side of Miss Holman now, but the clever side," laughed Jane Montgomery. "Did you notice her Phi Beta Kappa key? Wonder what her college or university is?"

"Yes, I noticed her key," answered Milfred. "I thought those things belonged only to 'grinds,' but I know she never sat around with her nose in a book all the time; she likes people too well. She must be terrifically bright, though. I tell you I like her. We haven't had anybody come around here for many a day that could measure up to her. I'm proud too, that she's an Association worker. Say, Ethel, how many times a year are we entitled to her? We have a right to ask for a visit from a National Secretary every so often, haven't we?"

"Yes," replied Ethel; "but I am afraid we can't get her again this year; she has too many other places to go all over the country. She told me that she was going to the Pacific next month to visit Berkeley and a lot of those universities and colleges out there."

"My, what a raft of girls she must see in a year," suggested Sarah. "Do you suppose she ever gets tired of them? I should think she would once in a while, though she doesn't act like it."

"No, I'm sure she doesn't," replied Ethel.

"Every girl seems to have a special interest for her. She told me this afternoon she just loves girls."

"Come on, Jane," said Helen Hatfield as she got up with a stretch and all but a yawn, "I'm getting woefully sleepy. I, too, am in love with Miss Holman, but I'm getting pretty anxious for bed. The ten o'clock bell rang a long time ago and here we are keeping poor old Ethel and Milfred up."

Helen had made the start and they all readily followed, saying their subdued good nights and slipping along the corridors to their rooms as quietly as possible and with due reverence to the ten o'clock warning.

While the cabinet girls were having their comfortable and confidential exchange, Marion herself was spending a most wretched time. After coming in with Clara Louise she sat down mechanically at her desk to study while her room-mate was pouring over a history theme to be handed in the next morning. Marion had managed to flounder through some ten pages of French, though she knew little of what she had read when the nine-thirty bell rang.

She was thankful enough the evening was over and hopped up with "Clara Louise, can't we take the 'Engaged' down now?"

An absorbed "Yes," came from the other desk and the engaged sign was taken off the door to Marion's relief, for she was looking for anything

that would be a change, — when two of her friends rounded the corner with, “And haven’t we been to your door a half dozen times tonight! What in the name of all that is curious have *you* got an engaged sign up for? Hope you’re not turning into ‘grinds’ in here,” and they burst in upon Clara Louise.

“Oh, no!” laughed Marion, “we’re just turning into themes.”

There was no more work for Clara Louise, and she pushed her papers away from her with abandonment to her guests.

“We’ve come to get a cup of chocolate, Marion. Do make us one, that’s a dear. We are all quite famished.”

So the chafing dish was set a brewing to form a savory center for the festive *tête a tête* in progress. For the first time in that whole evening Marion had forgotten her “thinks.” They talked of the practice basket-ball team the next day, the “freshness” of the new instructor in history, and a dozen other things, till the ten o’clock bell, when with characteristic brevity they said they must go. Marion turned back into her room again to find those same “thinks” of the previous hour waiting for her.

Into bed she and Clara Louise rolled, but Marion could not fall asleep quickly for thinking of the chapel talk. Miss Holman had spoken briefly of the possibilities of a college life and had asked the questions, “Why are you here in college? For

what did you come, — why you instead of a dozen other girls in your home town just as deserving?" Marion puzzled over these questions again and again. She had come because her parents had sent her and she was there to get an education, she supposed; but why she should have that education rather than some of her friends at home was a perfect blank to her. She had never thought of that before. She was just going to trundle her little education under her arm, trot home, marry Gene, and that would end her responsibility. The dissatisfaction of that September day on Sunset was taking possession of her again. What that was worth while was to come from her college training; what that those other girls could not do? Why did Fate give it to her? And this evening, for the first time in her life, she realized that perhaps it wasn't altogether due to her parents that she was there. Perhaps there were possibilities in her life for which the Higher Being, she almost said Miss Holman's God, had a purpose and she was put there to work out that purpose. Then a deep longing came into her heart to know Miss Holman's God. If she could only talk to Him! He seemed so beautiful to her that night as she listened to Miss Holman speak of him as the Father. She had gone to church all her life, that was true, and her parents were church-goers, but somehow it had all seemed a worship about which she had thought little. It was a sort of inherited religion that she had not

made into a natural way of living as Miss Holman seemed to do. She was afraid to talk about such things, and she knew that never could she muster up courage to go to this new, unknown friend, as she liked to call her. And then if she did make up her mind to go, what if somebody should see her? She could not stand the quizzical looks of her friends. They would say that she was going to talk religion with the Secretary. She didn't quite like the sound of it herself; so she put this thought of talking with Miss Holman away from her for the time being and came back to the chapel message. "Miss Holman said," she continued, "'To whom much is given, of him much shall be required.' I never knew anybody required anything of me except a laugh. Will everybody expect things when I go home? And yet that is just what I thought I wanted that day over on Sunset. Now I shrink from it. What if they all are disappointed? What have I got to give them that they'll want? What will Grace Smith and Edith Downs want from me when I go back home? And she said to-night. 'Only as we realize our possibilities in college life can we measure up to our responsibilities!' Possibilities and responsibilities! These are big words that I have never looked into and I feel utterly helpless to fathom them now. I never stopped to think of having special responsibilities before. Guess that was what I wanted, though, out on Sunset. No it wasn't either; I had just got tired of laughing

and took a sudden notion that I wanted to be like Gene and have people look to me to do nice things for them; but I never knew that meant any special responsibility; I don't quite see how it does yet. Nobody can tell me but Miss Holman; for I could never ask anybody else; I am very much afraid I can never ask her. I don't see what the matter is with me, anyway! Nobody else seems worked up over that chapel talk! Clara Louise never peeped about it except to make a common-place remark when we first came away, and Jean and Gertrude, when they were in to-night, never said Y. W. C. A. Secretary once. Come to think about it, I wonder why I have never gone to any of the Association meetings. Why should it seem so unnatural when at home I go to church regularly? Oh, well! I suppose it is because none of my friends here go to Y. W. Dear, dear, I hope I'll see her to-morrow! She's so strong and splendid." Marion's thoughts grew more and more indefinite as her eyes grew heavier; at last she was lost to her troubles and perplexities in a deep sleep.

CHAPTER IV

BASKET BALL

Soon after breakfast came a tap on Miss Holman's door. On opening it she received a cheery "Good morning," from Milfred Morton.

"Good morning to *you*, Miss Morton. Won't you come in?"

"Yes, thank you, just for a moment," answered Milfred. "I came to ask you if you would like to go over to the gymnasium this morning to see a practice basket-ball game. I didn't know whether you would be interested, but I thought may be you'd like it."

"Indeed, I should like it very much, Miss Morton. Thank you for your kindness."

"Shall I call for you about eleven-forty?" asked Milfred.

"Yes, I shall be ready then and glad to go with you. I have two or three appointments with committees, but I am sure I can be through by that time."

So Milfred took her way down the corridor.

happy in the thought that she was going to have Miss Holman all to herself for a little while; consequently she was much surprised when she escorted her guest over at the proper hour to find that there were five or six girls waiting for them to come. The girls had heard that Miss Holman was to be at the gymnasium, and quite contrary to their custom they, too, decided that they wanted to see that particular practice game; so Milfred found she had to share her good time, though she was very happy in it nevertheless.

As Marion Mansfield came on the floor in her "gym" suit ready for the game, she was startled to see Miss Holman in the midst of a group of spectators. The color came to her face and she was a bit uncomfortable for a moment, yet she knew that she was happy, too. Several of the basket-ball girls came over and were introduced to their guest; but Marion went to the opposite side of the room and threw herself down on a pad beside Edith Henry. There she stayed, talking and joking till the starting whistle sounded. Then she was on her feet in a moment, all nerves and anxious to play well before Miss Holman, though she hadn't an idea whether her unknown friend knew the first thing about basket-ball or not. Soon she saw, however, that Miss Holman knew very well what was going on, and that she was following the moves with keenest interest.

Before the game had advanced very far, Miss

Holman turned to Milfred with the question, "Who is the pretty, light-haired girl at the other end playing at the basket? She plays beautifully."

"Yes, she is one of the star sophomore players. Marion Mansfield is her name. I don't know her very well, but I love to watch her. She has such a happy way about her, don't you think?"

"Yes, she has," responded Miss Holman, "Oh, they were passing the ball so well! Isn't that too bad! She slipped, didn't she?"

"That was a shame, but do you notice, Miss Holman, that Marion Mansfield never frowns or looks out of sorts when her side makes a mistake? That's one reason why I like to watch her. The most she ever shows is a disappointed smile. That speaks well for a girl when she is right in the midst of a game."

"Who is that little girl over yonder who passes so quickly and so surely?" asked Miss Holman again.

"They call her 'Little' Warren; Florence is her name. Isn't she good, though? You know all about a good game, I see."

"Well, I ought to know a little something about the game," laughed Miss Holman; "I played the four years I was in college, but of course the last few years I haven't kept up with the new regulations."

"Splendid! I'm glad I brought you over." said Milfred.

"So am I. It quite takes me back to the old days."

The whistle sounded for the close of the first half, and every player took a pad for rest. Marion, as she lay there, was glad she had played a good half, and was still gladder to see that Miss Holman knew what a good game was. She wished that she could go over and meet her, but there seemed no excuse, and she could never go over there and ask for an introduction; so she lay still wishing every minute the whistle would blow so that she could get up and be doing something. She opened her eyes very wide when all at once she saw "Little" Warren hop up from her pad and walk straight over to Miss Holman with a resolute air.

Others near by were also surprised and still more so when they heard "Little" Warren say, "Miss Holman, I'm Miss Warren, and I want to say I'm glad to see you like basket-ball. I think your chapel talk last night was the most sensible one we've had for a long time. It was something a girl could get hold of. I haven't much use for most chapel talks, but you got right down to our plane of living. I'm coming to your meeting to-night."

"Thank you! Miss Warren, I'm so glad to see you, and I shall look for you to-night," replied

Miss Holman, as "Little" Warren with a queer, wee laugh went off to take her place on the floor, for the signal had sounded.

The second half proved quite as exciting as the first, for it was well played, and no point was won without a contest.

When the game was over Miss Holman turned to the girls with, "This has been such a good hour; it was all I could do to keep from getting out there with the team, myself."

"Oh, Miss Holman, would you play in a game, if we got it up? It would be such fun," ventured Milfred.

"Yes, do," urged Helen Meyers. "We can get a suit for you, and have teams to play in no time."

"All right, I will," laughed Miss Holman; "but you know I haven't played for the last three or four years; so please get slow teams, or I'll lose my breath."

"What fun! When can we have it?" asked Jane Montgomery.

"I believe it would be better not to have it till to-morrow, as I have appointments for most of this afternoon," suggested Miss Holman.

"Would to-morrow afternoon at two be a good time for you?" asked Milfred.

"Yes, that would be all right."

So all the girls left in excited anticipations of the coming game, except Milfred who walked over

to Miss Holman's room with her. As she turned to say good bye she whispered, "I'm so glad you have got hold of Florence Warren. She is an anomaly; nobody has been able to touch her, and she has sometimes almost scoffed at the Association work. I never was so surprised in all my life as I was to see her coming up to you. I believe you will find that she is at the meeting to-night."

Marion was another unexpected girl who made up her mind to go to the meeting that evening, though she had said nothing about it. As the time drew near she felt a bit uneasy, for she dreaded to tell her room-mate. It was so strange for her to be going to a prayer meeting at college. She knew Clara Louise would not understand her. Just as she was getting ready to say something about it, some one rapped, and in came Virginia with two other seniors.

"At home this evening?" questioned Virginia.

"Yes, indeed," Clara Louise cordially called out.

And Marion thought, "Oh, dear, what shall I ever do!"

"We're not going to stay. We are out gathering in the clan, and just stopped to tell you to come over to Jean's room for the evening. She is going to have some sort of chafing-dish affair."

"We'll be there, surely. Thank you! When shall we come?" responded Clara Louise.

"Any time. She has a funny story to read

which I suppose she'll begin when we all get there."

"I don't believe I can come," interrupted Marion. "Please excuse me."

"For goodness' sake, why?" asked Clara Louise, in surprise.

"Don't tell us you are going to study, Mary dear," added one of the seniors; "it isn't becoming."

"Marion, we are all going to have a dandy, cosy, little time — just a few of us — and you must come to help along. What's the matter?" asked Virginia.

"I want to hear Miss Holman speak to-night."

"Oh, pshaw! that's nothing but a dry old prayer meeting," suggested Alice James, the other senior.

"Whoever heard of Marion's going over to the 'Christians?'" laughed Virginia. "You will be quite out of place there, my happy Mary."

"Say what you want to," laughed Marion in return, "I have quite made up my mind, and I shall be delighted to have company, if any one will go with me."

Virginia looked at her questioningly and finally said, "You certainly are an enigma to-night." With that she turned to go out the door, but stopped to look back and say with a little disappointment in her voice, "We shall miss you."

After they were gone, Clara Louise asked

almost impatiently, "Whatever put it into your head to go there, Marion?"

"I like to hear her; she says things worth listening to."

"I know, but it won't be anything but a common everyday prayer meeting, and we can have so much fun over at Jean's."

Marion came over to Clara Louise and throwing her arm around her room-mate in a half laughing, half sympathetic way said, "You dear old Clara Louise! you don't have to stay away from Jean's just because I'm not going."

"You're surely going to the meeting, then?"

"Yes, dear."

"Well, I hope you won't turn into one of those prosaic, old, religious people. That's all. You are so queer to-night, Marion. Guess I'll go on over to Jean's now. Good bye," and Clara Louise started off with a heart a bit heavy, and with her relations to her dearest college friend all but strained.

"Good bye," answered Marion, but as soon as the door closed she buried her head in her hands and choked down a big sob. What the girls had said had cut her keenly. Never before had she known that her friends had such an aversion to prayer meetings. She had never really thought anything about it; therefore she had not realized that it would be such a difficult thing to go to a religious meeting, if she wanted to do so. She had known

that it would be a trifle unusual and therefore embarrassing, but she had never thought for a moment that she would have to face sarcasm. Another thing that was strange to her was that she held out in her determination to go, notwithstanding all the opposition. What was it that forced her to go? She could not answer that, but she jumped up very soon to get away, as she said to herself, before she saw anybody else.

Marion walked down to the Lodge and back before she went to the chapel, that she might get into her customary state of mind, at least so far as appearances went.

As she came in they were singing. The body of the chapel was almost full, and she dropped into a back seat by one of her classmates who gave her a cordial smile as she sat down, yet who felt a great, happy question rising in her heart to see Marion Mansfield there. She wanted to say something to her, but she didn't quite have the courage, so she only offered her a part of her hymn-book. Marion didn't sing much of that song. Her eyes were fastened on the platform, where Miss Holman sat with Ethel Stevenson. Then she turned to the audience. There were many girls she had not thought of seeing in this kind of gathering, and it was a larger meeting than she had expected. Half of the college must have been present, it seemed to her. Marion usually enjoyed the singing more than any other part of the service, but that night

she felt that the exercises were never going to pass the preliminaries and come to Miss Holman's part.

At last Ethel Stevenson came forward and introduced Miss Holman in a very brief, modest manner. Marion thought she had never seen Ethel look so pretty. There was such an indescribable something in her face that made her specially attractive and that Marion longed for in her own life, a something that seemed to satisfy.

The same quiet, strong woman stood before her again, and Marion was lost to all else. The speaker asked them to bow their heads for a moment in silent prayer, and then she lifted her voice to the Father in thanksgiving that she was there with them, and that they were given this wonderful fellowship together, and after that the petition came out so clear, so earnest: "My Father, as Christ in the garden did call, 'Mary, Mary!' in His own tender love, and she looked up into His face and knew Him and answered 'Master!' so I ask Thee that, to-night, Thou wilt come very near to every girl in this room, and that Thou wilt, through the Christ, speak in Thy low, unmistakable tone to her and call *her* by name, whether she be Mary, Florence, Mabel, or still another. And Oh, my precious Father, may she look up into the infinitely tender face of the Christ, and read in those eyes something of the depth of the wonderful love that has suffered all for her, that craves response from her, and so do Thou give her the understanding,

the strength, the love that she may, with the Mary of the past centuries, answer 'Master!' " Her voice seemed to ring in every heart as she uttered this personal petition and not a girl present could doubt Miss Holman's love.

Marion thought herself all heart, as she brushed the annoying tears away, with gratitude that the heads were bowed and that she would not be noticed.

At the close of the prayer, Miss Holman read Isaiah, chapter fifty-three, and then closing her Bible she stood a moment looking into their faces; but she broke the short silence with a keenness, a directness, and yet a tenderness that penetrated those before her as she said, "Know ye, ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."

It seemed to her hearers that they were in the sacred presence of the Christ himself. There was stillness over all the room as she spoke of the "price" that had been paid for them that they might not live unto themselves, but unto others and unto Christ who died for them and rose again. She assured them with all the sincerity of her heart that they were bought at an awful cost, and so belonged to the only One whom they could call Master and through whom they could live lives worth while. They felt the true consecration of her own life, as they listened. They recognized the magnetism that attracted them as only the great bonds of a great love for them; and that night, as they went away from the service in thoughtful

quietness, they knew they had been with a companion of God and with one who knew how to reach the hearts of girls, one who understood their difficulties.

Marion slipped out of the door before anyone had a chance to speak to her, and holding her cape about her tightly, she walked along the customary strolls of the campus for a half hour or more trying to cool her feverish restlessness.

"Oh, if she had seen me, she would have read my heart through and through!" she thought. "She would have known all the careless waste of my time; but what can I do? I am so wretched! I amount to so little. I am counting nothing for Christ, but all for Marion Mansfield, and all for her particular friends and family. I've tried to please Gene, and it isn't at all hard to please one you love with all your heart. I've tried to please mother, and the rest of the family; but I never thought about Christ, for He seems so far off. Can He be a person? He must be; He is so near *her*. But what can I do! I can't go around preaching; nobody would listen to me, if I did; and I don't like the idea. Miss Holman doesn't preach; she just talks and loves. Oh, my head, how it aches!" and she stopped and leaned it against a friendly tree. "I guess my heart aches more, though. If I only knew what to do, but this uncertainty is awful; and I'm ashamed of all this, too, that's the worst. I can't tell the girls, for they'll ask me, if I've got

religion; and yet I can't go on living for so little as I have done in the past. It's strange, though, to keep thinking of Christ, and every time I do anything, to do it unto Him, as she said. I wonder if *she* does; she speaks His name so reverently, and yet so naturally. I never heard anyone else do quite that way. When other people speak the name they seem to preach it. I don't ever remember mother's speaking it informally; Gene never says anything about Christianity, and both are just as good as good can be. Why can't I be like them and be comfortable? Why is it that I have this longing to be good, Miss Holman's way? I think it must be because I have tried Gene's way, and that I am not strong enough to do the good he does, and accomplish so much. If I could only talk it over with her — but I'm afraid. I want to know more of her Christ, to whom she says I owe so much; she made me believe I do. Yes, that's what makes me wretched, for I am facing a question I don't know how to face. Oh, dear! I must go in and meet Clara Louise. Perhaps I can hurry and slip into bed before she gets back, and then I won't have to talk." So she started on, walking rapidly and with but one thought before her mind, that of escaping Clara Louise's questions.

Marion had got up Saturday morning still with a heavy heart, and in rather an uncomfortable mood, as Clara Louise chatted on of the jolly time she had had, and asked Marion, with a tone of slight

sarcasm, if she had enjoyed her prayer meeting. Marion had answered that it was interesting and that she was glad she had gone, but she did not further elaborate the subject.

Things had sunk to the level of everyday affairs between them, when they heard a quick step and a knock at the door. "Come!" called Clara Louise, and in walked Milfred Morton with a "Good morning!"

"Miss Mansfield, I came to ask a favor of you. Miss Holman is an old basket-ball player, and she enjoyed the game so much yesterday, that we have persuaded her to play to-day; so we are around getting up a team, and I thought, may be, you would help out."

"Yes, I should be glad to," and a big lump of joy came into Marion's throat. She didn't dare to show how happy she was.

"The game is to be at two, this afternoon," continued Milfred. "Mary Hillman, Jane Martin, Ethel, 'Little' Warren, and I don't know who else are going to play. We are counting on a lot of fun; Miss Holman is so jolly. Thank you, very much. Good bye."

"And so Miss National Secretary was at the basket-ball game yesterday! Did you meet her?" queried Clara Louise.

"No," answered Marion, "but I like her."

"Oh, I thought there must be some personal attraction to get you to that prayer meeting!"

“Clara Louise! don’t, please,” and Marion looked around to her room-mate with eyes full of tears. She came up to her then, and placing a hand on each shoulder she looked her square in the face. “What is it, Clara Louise? We have never had anything come between us, and we musn’t now.”

“Nothing; only you are so quiet and — I can’t give you up as an old religious, uninteresting person that is always trotting off to prayer meeting,” and there was such a worried expression in her face as she pictured the awful calamity, that Marion laughed aloud, and with a kiss assured her that she would always try to be duly interesting. The sunshine seemed to come again into the spirit of the little room, but the barrier was not quite swept away. Both girls felt it, though the subject was dropped.

That afternoon, following Marion’s going to the game, Jean came in to talk matters over with Clara Louise. “Do tell me, Clara Louise, what has got into Marion; she wouldn’t come last night, but trotted off to that prayer meeting, and Virginia says she has gone over to play basket-ball with the Secretary now. That Miss Holman gave us a good chapel talk, but I don’t much fancy Marion’s taking to her and going to these revival meetings as she has done. It’s so unlike Marion. What are we going to do about it?”

“I don’t know,” answered Clara Louise, in a

tone of discouragement. "I tried to talk her out of it, but she laughed and promised to be interesting, and not wear basques buttoned up the front. You know how impossible it is to get around Marion's laugh. I could not get any more satisfaction out of her; but she has been to only one meeting, Jean."

"Of course; there's been only one; but I don't want her going in that Association 'gang.' They are all right, but they are not for Marion. I somehow like that Miss Holman, though; I declare I do. She looks wholesome."

While Jean and Clara Louise were having their consultation, Marion was in the height of jolly excitement. She had gone a little late, and as she hurried in, she found most of the players ready and waiting to begin. When she was introduced, Miss Holman took her hand in warm cordiality, as if to say, "I like you." Marion said but little, for she was feeling too much. Miss Holman laughingly continued that she was very much afraid of Miss Mansfield, for she had watched her play yesterday, and she didn't care to be her opponent.

Marion looked at her a moment as she thought, "Yes, you too are a girl."

As luck would have it, Miss Holman and Marion were the two tallest players on the floor; and the captain, Ethel Stevenson, placed Marion at one of the baskets, with Miss Holman as guard. Soon the whistle sounded and all were on the alert. Almost before they knew it, the ball was being thrown

into Marion's hands, when thump! came Miss Holman with a backhand stroke and the ball was hurled several feet toward the other basket as Miss Holman turned around to ask if anything had happened.

"A good deal, I think," laughed Marion. "You all but took it right out of my hands, and there it is hovering around the other basket now."

There were a few more skirmishes and the ball was whirled back to Marion. She turned to toss it into the basket, but saw nothing but Miss Holman's arms and hands in frantic movements, as it seemed to her, underneath, and overhead, and all around her at the same time. She had never had such a guard to contend with. She made a quick throw but not quickly enough to escape one of those mysterious backhanders of Miss Holman, and off the ball went again.

"Well, I never saw your equal!" laughed Marion, "How *do* you do it?"

"Indeed I never can tell you, Miss Mansfield, I didn't mean to. I saw you were going to make it with the ball, and as I turned around, I thought I might as well keep my arms going, and so the deed was done; but you know I have to do something out of the ordinary to keep up with you modern players," answered Miss Holman, cheerily.

"Oh, there! it's going in."

"No, Miss Mansfield, it is coming for you

again," and one of those backhanders was Marion's merry response.

Again the ball was in her hands and there again was Miss Holman threatening her every moment with the unaccountable stroke that had dislodged Marion's ball twice before. All at once she broke out laughing, holding the ball without even a sign of trying to do anything with it. The whistle sounded for over time and everybody was asking what was the matter.

"I simply give up," said Marion, and she broke into another peal. "Those innocently administered back strokes of Miss Holman are too much for me. They are simply convulsing."

"Oh, do go on, I beg of you!" protested her opponent, "Never again will I do it."

"You look pretty warm, Miss Holman."

"Oh, I am!" she half whispered as she turned to Marion. "I'm sure we've been playing a week and my breath is left down in the antipodes, but I'm going to finish this half whether I ever play another or not," she laughed.

The ball was started again, but before anything exciting happened the time was up, and they all gathered around Miss Holman to congratulate her on brilliant playing and on disconcerting one of their best players.

"You don't mind my telling you that you are a regular cracker-jack do you?" put in "Little" Warren.

"Not a bit of it!" promptly responded Miss Holman, "but I haven't much breath to furnish long replies."

Marion had stepped aside to watch Miss Holman's face and saw there thorough enjoyment of the present. She was a girl with the girls, and was entering into the game with the good-natured enthusiasm that brings only pleasure.

Again they were called, and the second half was begun. Soon Marion had made a score; and then when the ball was once more started, it took its course with great fairness to the other basket.

While all were watching it intently, Marion stepped up near Miss Holman and asked in a low tone, "Miss Holman, may I have a little talk with you soon?" She could scarcely keep the trembling from her voice.

"Yes, dear," was the quick and sympathetic response. "I have a half hour free to-morrow morning, right after breakfast, eight-thirty to nine. Can you come to my room then? I shall be so glad to see you."

"Yes, I thank you," said Marion, and the ball was thrust back to her hands. Once more Miss Holman was guarding, but the ball this time reached the basket.

The game was well played, it closed with but one score on each side. A triumphant lot of girls left the gymnasium, after finding such a companionable friend in Miss Holman. Back they went

into various little groups to talk over the hour, and back she went to her work among them in committees and personal interviews, much rested and relieved from the strain and intensity of her work through this recreation time.

Marion, however, followed along with no group, but threw on her sweater and struck off by herself across the campus and beyond the hedge down the path to the little violet greenhouse, where she ordered the most perfect bunch of violets she could see, sent up to Miss Ruth Holman, Main Building. Back she trudged to her room and Clara Louise, as if nothing had happened. She gave her roommate a glowing account of the game and Miss Holman's unlooked for plays till she had her quite overcome with the fun of it all and Clara Louise did not have the heart to make another protest to Marion about religious tendencies, at least for a while.

CHAPTER V

A PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Saturday evening Marion again went to the meeting, and again before she started she met some unkind remarks from two or three friends who had dropped into her room intentionally about the time for the service. She had, however, convictions in her own heart that made her go on, in face of opposition; for the keen words that cut to a nicety she had only a laugh and a bit of answering pleasantry that they never could touch. To ruffle her was utterly impossible when she had that laugh to come to the rescue. So about eight o'clock she left them disconcerted and quite out of patience with her, and over she went to the meeting that she could not keep away from and that was costing her so dearly, for every laugh she had given that evening was weighted down with tears. Once more, the next morning, she passed through the same ordeal at the breakfast table, and once more the shrinking of soul and the pain could be covered only by the merry laugh, forced though it was, as they asked

how she enjoyed her new *rôle*; if the Secretary was as fine as ever; if she would have any more time for her friends; and a dozen other questions.

After breakfast she was soon lost to her companions, and went over to Miss Holman's room with many a throbbing anticipation making its way into her heart as she drew near. Her quick tap on the door was greeted cheerily by a "Good morning, Miss Mansfield," and a cordial hand-shake from Miss Holman.

"I wish you to see my violets; are they not choice?" and she held them out for Marion to share their fragrance.

Marion now noticed that she was wearing some of them as she had done the night before. This made her very happy for she knew that they had been appreciated, and now, as Miss Holman touched their upturned faces, she saw that they were loved.

"I don't know where they came from," continued Miss Holman. "I wish I did. They were brought to me last night. I do want to tell their giver how much they are meaning to me," and with this she turned her eyes from the flowers to Marion who, she saw, was blushing to the very roots of her hair.

"Oh! did you send them?" she asked. "I know you did; your face tells the story," and with that she came to the girl, and taking both her hands warmly, said, "Thank you! thank you! I love them. They have brought me so much cheer and help."

As they stood there for a moment, quietly, each one looking earnestly into the face of the other, they formed a picture of excellent contrast — both tall, about the same height; both comely and full of life, yet different: the older of the two with soft, wavy, dark brown hair; the younger with the gold of the sunshine caught up in its fluffiness; the older with eyes of blue that spoke of loyalty and depths of love; the younger with brown eyes that loved well and happily, but had not yet known the costs of life; the older one with an expression in her sensitive face that spoke of experience, growth, understanding, and sympathy, while the face of the younger, though telling of joy and gentleness, was yet untouched by the deeper experience and development that made the face of the other so womanly.

Marion answered her friend with an embarrassed laugh, saying that she had sent the violets to tell her something she could not find words for.

“I understand, dear, and I get a love message from them,” answered Miss Holman as she drew Marion down beside her on a cosy seat.

“Do you?” asked Marion eagerly and earnestly.

“Yes, and my heart answers back so gladly.”

Then for the first time in her life Marion found it easy to pour her thoughts out to another about the little flower-children.

“You, too, love them, Miss Holman; I feel it. The violets are such dear, nestling things — pre-

cious intimates to whom I can always confide much; and their blue eyes, so true, look up to me with the sympathy and love that never change. I always know how I am going to find them, for they are ever in the same happy spirits. Do you know, Miss Holman, I often think of them in contrast with people; the fragrance of their lives is given out in all generosity and yet with such gentleness and unobtrusiveness."

"Yes, dear, it is wonderful. Did you ever carry it a little farther and notice how they are always true to their Creator's purpose for them, and offer to Him the fruits of their living as each season goes by?"

"Yes, I did think of that once when I got dissatisfied with myself," and the troubled look came back to Marion, a look her friend was quick to see.

"It is a very precious thought to me," continued Miss Holman; "and then when the summer time is over they tuck their little heads down close to the bosom of mother earth and she covers them up warm and snug, while they fall into their long sleep in perfect confidence of the protecting care that will keep them during the long winter months, the period of their rest. I sometimes long with all my heart," and her eyes filled with tears, "for the time when the soul-children of the Father will live in such perfect peace and harmony and accordance with His wishes for them, giving out

the joy of their lives in truer and even more beautiful messages than those His flowers can ever speak."

"*You do, Miss Holman.*"

"Oh, no, dear, I fail many times and it grieves me so; how it must grieve Him. You are very rich in possessing the habit of observing, for you may thus read many of the rarest secrets of the Father's love. His hand is continually writing messages of His infinite compassion and beauty in life all about us, in fields, in gardens, trees, birds, flowers; but so few of us take time to read them. Your greenhouse violets are not the sturdy children of the woods, but they are wonderfully brave in carrying on their work in the winter. With a little encouragement and the necessary care they appear glad to do their part toward giving the summer cheer to the cold season."

"It is so good to talk with you about flowers. You understand; and it does not seem sentimental to you; but I really didn't come to talk about violets. It's a less agreeable subject," and she looked up to Miss Holman hesitatingly; Miss Holman waited silently; "but I feel I need to ask you about it, though I wish I could talk flowers with you all day." Miss Holman smiled, and put her hand over on Marion's to reassure her.

"It's myself, Miss Holman."

"Yes, dear. What is it that troubles you? I saw some unhappiness hidden behind the smile as

you came in." This sympathetic understanding and anticipation helped.

"I never talked with anyone before, I don't know how to tell you, I really don't know how to tell myself," she said as she smiled through the tears. "You know I told you a few moments ago that once the flowers and nature had spoken to me of their life fulfilling God's purpose. That happened over on Sunset Hill one afternoon in September; but it was unpleasant to be dissatisfied with one's self and I succeeded in putting it all aside until you came and talked in chapel, the other night, about responsibilities; and then it all came back and almost overwhelmed me. I don't know how to take responsibilities, Miss Holman. Everything has always been planned for me, my future is cared for and I have never realized until lately what I should need to be to measure up to its requirements. I have never done much but laugh and be glad. It is so strange not to be happy; people always expect a laugh from me and for the first time in my life, it has been a little inconvenient this fall." Again the pathetic little smile came with the torrent of words: "I have felt more that I was laughing to order. The reason of all this I haven't understood, but I think," she added with a child-like appeal, "I think I do understand a little now. I believe your Christ wants something more of me, and He has been trying to tell me about it, but I don't know how to listen.

I don't know what He says. Your talks have helped me to see this; now I want to know what to do."

"It is most natural, Marion, that with your larger and clearer vision you should be filled with the ambition to do something to make your life count for the very best. No girl can come into a deep realization of the unusual opportunities and privileges which college life brings without an intense desire to measure up to every responsibility, both while in college and after graduation. The service you render now will prepare you for whatever God has for you in the future. There is much you can do, Marion. God has not left you with but one talent."

"Since I have known you I have come to realize, Miss Holman, that the one lesson above all others I need to learn is that of giving myself."

"Dear, this is indeed one of the most precious, as well as necessary lessons which the dear Christ would teach us, and the one thing He practiced preëminently. You have such a wonderful opportunity to do this through the beautiful friendships God has given you. The girls trust you and love you, and many of them hunger for what you have to give them of Jesus Christ. Then, I have learned that you have a beautiful gift in your voice. Have you ever thought of giving that to Christ?"

"No, never! for I always thought that belonged to me."

"I, too, thought that my life and all that was

in it belonged to myself until one day God showed me through First Corinthians, chapter six, the nineteenth and twentieth verses, that I was not my own but that my whole life had been purchased at a terrible price and that now it was altogether His."

"Oh, thank you, now I begin to see. Yes, that is it," added Marion contemplatively. "But Miss Holman, the Christ seems so near to *you*. I have thought of Him only in the sense of worship. Help me to see Him as a person. I could give myself to Him so much more easily if I could be as sure of His presence as I am of yours now."

"Take these two references with you as your daily food: First Corinthians, chapter six, the nineteenth and twentieth verses, as I have already mentioned; also Galatians, second chapter, verse twenty; and then think of the Christ as you do of a friend. Have you never had a very dear friend of whom you think often, from whom you hear often, to whom you write often, thus keeping in close touch with that friend who at times is so near you that you can all but hear the voice even though that friend be hundreds of miles away?"

"Yes," answered Marion thoughtfully as she turned to Gene and his love for her.

"You feel your friend's spirit to be hovering very near. If you will take Christ's promises of His nearness, if you will give Him the daily prayer communion, and come to His word for the message for each day, as well as make it a habit to refer

even your smallest actions and thoughts to His wishes, I have the assurance, out of my own experience, to say to you that you will know that His own personal presence is always near you, to guide, to guard as well as to love and comfort; you will understand, then, how to listen and you will know what He says.”

The girl looked intently into Miss Holman's face as she said, “Oh! can that be true? Can I do something in life that will be worth while? Will they look for something besides a laugh from me?”

Miss Holman put her arm around Marion and drew her to her. The weary, troubled spirit found relief in fast-falling but quiet tears.

At length Marion broke the silence as she sat up. “That was such a rest. You will help me?”

“Yes, yes, gladly will I do anything I can; but I am weak myself. You must lean hard on your Christ. He is your sure support; and, dear, don't think of what people will expect from you, for that will make it too hard to bear. You will continually be disappointing them; they will be constantly misunderstanding you. Think only of what the Christ expects from you, He who understands you as does no one else.” Then Miss Holman bent very near as she said, “I believe you will find that He expects love from you for those about you, more than anything else. What this old world needs is love, love! You have possibilities in you

that you know not of. Let the precious Christ unfold them to you."

"How is it, Miss Holman, that some people are so good without the Christ?"

"I don't know," responded Miss Holman thoughtfully. "It is hard enough to be just fairly good. I don't see how any one can be good at all without the inspiration, the ideal, the real, personal help of the divine Christ." Miss Holman looked straight into Marion's eyes as she said, "I don't believe, Miss Mansfield, any one was ever really good without Christ's help. He came down here and died for us. He would not have done that unless it had been absolutely necessary. He tells us, 'Without Me, you can do nothing,' and I believe that, every word. I cannot feel that anything done without Him can be of lasting value."

"I don't understand all you say, but I am going to begin with what I do understand; then perhaps the other will come. You will probably be surprised when I tell you that I do not belong to the Young Women's Christian Association, here."

"No, dear, I am not surprised," said Miss Holman with a smile; "but I shall be surprised if you don't join, for by doing so you will put yourself in line of doing the greatest good while in college."

"I am going to join, and I am going to do something for Him, if it is only singing for Him." A bright smile lit her face as she said this.

"*Only* singing, Miss Mansfield? I can think of

no natural gift more rare than that of a beautiful voice. Through your singing you may win many to Christ. Will you sing for me before I go?"

"I should love to do so." She could have asked nothing that would give Marion such deep pleasure. "You have done so much for me, Miss Holman, that even the smallest enjoyment I can give you makes me glad. My heart is full of gratitude. Singing has seemed a very small thing for me to do because it is easy, but if my voice can count for Him, I give it all."

They knelt for a few moments in prayer together; and then came another girl to the door who was to talk with Miss Holman; but before Miss Holman opened the door Marion stopped her with, "You will help me."

"Yes, always, every bit that I can."

"If I could have you always!"

"No dear, you have One who is much better than I could ever be. Whatever there is in me that is worth while, whatever there is that would help you, is only what the Christ has put there, and you can have Him first hand and forever;" but she added in a happy little way, "You will always let me be your friend, no matter how many hundreds of miles separate us."

"Oh, that will be good!" and Marion left the room with the joy in her heart of a new found friend.

She attended Miss Holman's meetings regularly

in spite of the jokes which were had at her expense about "devotion," etc., and in spite of the protests from her best friends. She was not sure enough of herself to say much yet. She could only go and drink in all the help she was able to absorb and then come back to her surroundings and be cheerful and kind. Somehow the jeers had lost their sting since that talk with Miss Holman though they had hurt her immeasurably; nevertheless they were easier to bear for the Christ than they had been for herself. Association girls had been very happy to see Marion's interest; but they had had the tact to intrude with no solicitations of any kind.

The cabinet meeting, after Miss Holman's visit, was turned into a thanksgiving. The touch of so rare a woman, for even a few days in the Association, had meant not only a winning in a most natural way of many formerly disinterested girls to Christ, and the Association, but it meant a vital regeneration among numbers of Christian girls, and new life to Association workers.

It had been with a multitude of regrets and quite as many anticipations for a return that they had bidden Miss Holman good bye.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTMAS

One Friday evening, early in December, a maid came to Marion's room with a card for Miss Mansfield. It was a gentleman's card. As Marion saw the name, a bright color came to her cheeks and quickly spread over her whole face.

"Who is it, Mary dear?" asked Clara Louise with her curiosity increasing as she saw her roommate turning from pink to a deep scarlet.

"A Mr. Casey," was the answer abstractedly given.

"Well, who is he? Do tell me! He must be somebody very interesting! Why are you blushing so?"

"I didn't know I was blushing; I'll tell you about him some day," laughed Marion. "Now I must go."

She had hurried from the room to escape Clara Louise's questions, but when she was out she scarcely knew what to do. She wondered why she had not told Clara Louise about him before this. Per-

haps it was because she was afraid that she would be induced to say something about Gene. She had sworn Virginia to secrecy about the Mohonk episode and the subject had never been brought up between them, except when Virginia spoke of it with an attached tease. Where was Virginia now? With this question in her mind, she walked over to the Main Building, into the side door to escape the parlors, and up to Virginia's room.

There she found her friend just finishing dressing. "Why, Mary dear, how are you? He's come at last. Isn't your heart palpitating? Mine is for you. You look as if you feared that he were going to drop you on the spot. Never mind, I'll protect you." And with this she gave her friend a merry kiss.

"This is one of your very, very pretty nights, Marion."

Marion laughed. "You old match-maker! Be careful or you may be caught yourself."

"Not a bit afraid! I hope he enjoys this wait for his Princess. You see I had just got settled down for a comfortable evening in my *negligee*, but I am quite willing to take the extra trouble of dress for such an evening. I am so glad you came for me. I want to see his expression when you approach," she teased.

"Virginia, if you don't stop your nonsense"—laughed Marion.

No, indeed, my dear! I'm going to trot you

down to the Senior Parlor and make you sing for him. I'll show off all your accomplishments," interrupted Virginia.

"Hush! you naughty child."

At last they came down to the parlor in search of the nervous Mr. Casey who felt that he had been waiting a week, at least.

He had said to himself, "This love business is the most upsetting affair I ever had. Used to think I had a pretty firm nerve. December! Seems to me I have waited long enough to appear indifferent. Just a polite call, don't you know, on my way to Albany on business—a-ah-hem! principally to catch the train back, so I can stop a second time."

Cordial greetings were exchanged. Virginia was the only one of the three who could enjoy them, for the others were quite as uncomfortable as two self-conscious people could well be. The strain of the occasion was relieved by Virginia's prompt proposal to go up to the Senior Parlor. College life was discussed in all its phases. Opinions were given, *pro* and *con* on topics of the day, politics, and almost every thing else, except Mohonk, which, judging by its omission, was a tender subject. Virginia suddenly broke this monotonous and commonplace passing of time by asking Marion to sing for them. She responded gladly, for she knew that it would be a change in which to forget her embarrassment.

As Marion started the second song, she became

aware of a true tenor voice accompanying her in a subdued tone. "That is splendid, Mr. Casey. Do come over and help me."

"Thank you, I'm fond of music," and the alacrity with which he accepted the invitation showed how difficult it had been for him to be silent as long as he had.

"I hope you don't mind the stereotyped remark, but I like your voice, Miss Mansfield."

"Thank you," responded Marion, "I love to sing, and especially enjoy singing with some one."

After that she sang several songs with Mr. Casey, and the evening passed pleasantly, for their voices blended well and they found real pleasure in singing together.

At the close, Mr. Casey took his leave feeling that he had discovered better treasures than he had expected. Virginia extended a warm invitation to him to stop on his way back from Albany. This invitation was seconded by Marion in a frank, welcome manner, for she had forgotten any personal concern which she had felt about seeing him. She had truly enjoyed his singing and wanted another such evening, having sorely missed during the college months the songs with her brothers.

After their caller had disappeared, Virginia went part way with Marion to her room. "I say, Marion, he scarcely took his eyes off you once while you were singing; and didn't he jump when you asked him to come and join you?"

"Virginia, Virginia, do let that idea drop out of your busy little mind. Mr. Casey cares nothing for such things in me. He thinks he sees a chance for some frolic up here, and so he has come. He certainly has an appreciative humor, and can offer his share of it."

"Honest, now, Marion, don't you like him? He is mighty clever and his tenor is superb."

"Yes, I think he is good company, and I did enjoy his voice immensely."

"We are getting on beautifully; I am quite encouraged," added Virginia knowingly. "You are hard to convert but— Good night, dear," and she hurried to her room, thinking, "He's good company. It's fun to have him come, and still more fun to tease dear old Mary. Never saw her plagued so easily before. She has always treated men till now in a sort of good-comradeship way. I believe she does like him."

Marion found Clara Louise waiting for her.

"Come right here and tell me all about it," said Clara Louise, seating herself comfortably on the couch in the midst of a bunch of pillows and making a place for Marion beside her.

"You look as if you were settling down for an all night visit," said Marion, as an amused smile crept over her face.

"May be I am. First, I think you must confess why you haven't told me before."

"Clara Louise, I truly don't know. It all

happened at Mohonk, and was so ridiculous that Virginia teased me. I guess I was bothered and embarrassed for about the first time in my life."

"And couldn't tell your own Clara Louise," in a hurt manner.

"Please don't be hurt! I wouldn't hurt you for the world. Let me tell you all," and she drew Clara Louise to her while she gave a vivid description of the Mohonk episode, to the keen amusement of both girls.

"How I wish I could have been there! What does he look like, Marion?"

"He's a blue-eyed, fair-haired, rosy-cheeked fellow of jovial spirits. He's a man of generous proportions, as you may already have guessed. That's really about the only impression I have of him except that he has an unusual tenor voice."

"Do you like him?"

"Yes, first-rate. He is a ready entertainer. I am going to take you with us to see him the next time he comes which will be in about a week, on his way back to New York."

"That looks suspicious. Is he dangerous?"

"Not at all," laughed Marion. "You will like him. Promise me that you will not breathe a word of this to anyone, not even to Virginia, for she already has too many nonsensical ideas about the rescued and the rescuer."

In about a week Virginia came over to Marion's

with a most important and secret air as she handed out the following note:

“My dear Miss Manning,—I go through Lansdowne Thursday evening and shall call at the college in response to your kind invitation. I trust that I shall see you and Miss Mansfield. Hoping that this will cause you no inconvenience, or that you will feel free to say so if it does, I am

“Most cordially yours,

“Jack Casey.”

“How jolly it is to be middle-man and know all that is going on! ‘Trusting that I may see you and Miss Mansfield!’ That sounds well, Mary dear!”

“I am going to bring Clara Louise along. I think she will enjoy him.”

“Poor Jack! He’ll have two on-lookers then,” sighed Virginia with a mock-sympathetic raising of the eye-brows and a shaking of the head.

The call came in good time and another satisfactory evening of music and good-fellowship slipped by.

Clara Louise had said afterward, “I like him tremendously! He’s such fun! And I like to hear you two sing together, Marion.”

And so one day had followed another with nothing very exciting on hand till, just before Christmas vacation, came an express box to Marion from New York. It proved to be a modest, but

beautiful, bunch of violets with Mr. Casey's card and the best wishes of the season. To say that Marion was uneasy gives only a hint of her real feelings. There is one thing sure: events had to take a different turn; violets were such a small thing to make a fuss about; she didn't want to be priggish, she had been saying to herself. Nevertheless she could not have it, she had resolved.

Then she buried her face in the midst of the flowers: "O you little dears! to think that your Marion should ever refuse you; to think that you should be the bearers of a message of intrusion. No! you opened the way for me to my dear Miss Holman; and I can't thank you enough. You shall always be peculiarly sacred. Oh! why did I ever ask him to come back? I—I thought only of his singing."

At this point Virginia appeared. "What exquisite flowers, Marion. Where did they come from, may I ask?"

"Yes, Mr. Casey sent them," said Marion briefly.

"I told you he l-i-k-e-d you," drawled Virginia. "Poor fellow! he didn't dare to be partial. I can't keep it any longer: he sent me a bunch just like this. I felt sure I'd find that you had one, too."

"Why didn't you tell me at first, you rogue?"

"I had to get some sport out of it, didn't I?"

"Well, I'm pretty much relieved! You have kept saying such foolish things to me that I was

almost frightened into wondering, when this box came."

"It was certainly very kind of him."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Marion, assured now that it meant only a friendly little greeting. The unpretentious character of the gift and the fact that it had come to both of them made her like Mr. Casey all the better.

In a few days there was a general bustle through the corridors, the getting of trunks around and making preparations for the holiday departure.

During the freshman year Marion had not gone back to her Minnesota home for the short vacations, but this year the heart-strings were pulling rather vigorously to bring her westward; and too, Gene was adding pressure at the other end of the line; consequently, it was decided that she should spend her Christmas time at home. Her heart was bounding with joyous anticipations, as she among other girls was hurrying about doing last things. She wondered if there was another girl in that college who was packing her trunk and feeling as great happiness as she felt. It seemed to her that it would almost be a relief to get up on the house-top and shout to the four winds that she was going home to her family and to Gene; but instead she vented her feelings in singing almost constantly to herself as she tucked things away for the homeward journey.

The trip was full of interesting incidents and

good company until Marion reached Chicago; but from there on to Minneapolis she traveled in quiet enjoyment of the days ahead of her. Her two brothers, her father, and Gene met her at the station. It was a satisfaction to feel the strong grip of Gene's hand and to realize that she was with him once again. Then the happy home-coming to her mother followed. All was so "homey" and so cheery; she felt there was nothing to be added. Gene stayed to dinner and spent the evening. That dinner! What a meal it was with all her favorite dishes! The mother had planned it so and Marion said over and over again that nothing had ever tasted so good in all her life. Who can fathom the little thoughtfulnesses that creep into a mother-heart for her child! They never even occur to anyone else, while she is always preparing these cherished surprises.

Dear old Gene! it was so good to see him, but he was somewhat worn; his eyes looked tired. She thought it all over as she slipped into bed that night. She had wanted to ask him about it as they stood at the door before he went, and as she had an opportunity of looking up into his face. It had bothered her; and she felt almost impatient for the time when she could see him again and alone to find out what was the matter. Surely, something troubled him and she ought to help him bear it. It was not right for her to be so full of new joy when he was carrying a burden. She usually re-

ceived two letters a week from him; not so the last week. This had disappointed her a bit; but she had put anxiety aside with the thought that he was probably busy, and had not sent the second letter since he was to see her soon. Because all these things crowded her mind now she could not get to sleep so quickly as she would have liked.

The next evening brought the opportunity for this talk. Gene came; after a general family visit, she had taken him into the library. He drew her into his arms with such gentleness that there came to her a deeper realization of his love and the suppressed hunger of his heart.

"What is it, dear?" she had asked almost before they had closed the door. There was an anxious tone in her voice. "You look tired. It hurts me to see you so."

"I have been putting in rather long hours," he had answered; "but there is nothing the matter. I am perfectly well;" and he gave a queer little laugh, as much as to say, "Let's not talk about it."

Marion was quiet for a few moments.

"I missed your letter last week, Gene."

"Did you, dear? I'm sorry I was so busy, but I thought that I'd see you soon. You look so well and happy, Marion. I'm glad you haven't worked too hard."

"Happy? Why shouldn't I be happy? I have you and my family and am home. But there

is an added joy that has come into my life, Gene, that I want to share with you. Somehow I could not write it. I have a new friend, a very precious friend. Miss Holman is her name. She is a National Student Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association, and in that capacity she visited college for a few days. I can't begin to tell you all, but oh! she is so wonderful and beautiful. She has taught me so much of living and of the Christ. She is young — only a few years older than I am — jolly, and yet very spiritual and consecrated. And dear, she loves *me*." Her eyes filled. "That makes me very happy. She is making your Marion more fit every day to be yours though still very short of the mark. You will be patient and help, too; won't you, dear?" and Marion leaned toward him with loving upturned face.

"O Marion! you don't know what you are asking. You must teach me. I do not deserve you," and he put his hand over hers.

"Gene, don't say that, please. You are so splendid, and my inspiration. I want you to know her. She is very busy; I probably won't see her often; but I feel she is my friend forever, no matter what may happen. I know I am going to keep her always. I watched her making friends, while she was at college. Her heart is so big that she has room for all and a separate place for each one. She wrote me the dearest little note after she

left, just to tell me she was thinking of me and wishing to see me. Wasn't that dear?"

"How about your other friend, Mr. Casey?" asked Gene quickly.

"Mr. Casey? Just as funny as ever. I told you that he came a second time to see us. He has really an uncommon voice. Just before we left, he sent Virginia and me each a holiday greeting, — some violets."

Marion felt Gene's hand tremble, and he started to take it from hers; but she detained it. "Why, Gene! What is it?" with anxiety ringing in every word she pronounced.

"I don't know, dear," and he got up to walk up and down the room for a moment. She saw an expression of unutterable pain cross his face.

"Gene, what is it? I can't stand this," and she came to him.

"I don't understand, myself."

"Is it— is it Mr. Casey, Gene?" asked Marion, almost afraid of the question.

"Forgive me, Marion; forgive me!" and his eyes were blurred for an instant as he took both her hands. "Help me to overcome."

"O my dear one! You know I love no one but you. He came; Virginia liked him; and I couldn't be rude. There is nothing for you to be concerned about; it is only a friendly acquaintance; but I'll tell him I am engaged to you, if you say so, Gene," and here her voice broke.

“Marion, my love, please don’t explain any further. No! say nothing to him. I trust you absolutely; but forgive me, I ask you, for doing you such an injustice—for hurting you. I am not worthy of you. Can you still love me?”

“Yes, yes, a thousand times over, Gene; and if there is any thing to forgive, I do it so gladly. I see how you, ’way out here, would not understand; I see it all. I might have done the same thing.”

“No, Marion! There is no excuse for me. Your letters explained fully what he was and how you regarded him; and in each letter in which you spoke of him, you seemed to put in an extra measure of love for me. There was no excuse; the temptation came, and I gave way. The violets were too much for me. I thought I was more of a man than this. Never before did I know this sort of thing was in my nature. I had not intended to show it; but I couldn’t help it. Forgive me, Marion! I cannot forgive myself.”

“Gene, I saw the sorrow in your face the very first night. Tell me! was it wrong for me to accept those violets?”

“No, dearest. It was only a pleasant little remembrance. You did entirely right. I have been all wrong.”

“Dear Gene, only one thing more. Tell me that you believe me when I say I’ll never, never let any acquaintance or friendship with another interfere with our love.”

"I do believe you, Marion, with all my heart."

The remainder of the evening was too quickly gone. As Gene bade Marion good-night he whispered, "My heart is full of peace and gratitude to you. I shall be a better and a stronger man now that the clouds are breaking away, my own little helper."

One morning, while Marion was in the city shopping, her brother George, a high school lad of about fifteen, came into the library where his mother happened to be mending and threw himself down on the couch. Something was brewing, his mother plainly saw as she looked up to smile a welcome to him; and although she knew he had some subject, whatever it was, he wanted to talk over, she sewed quietly on — not wishing to interrupt his train of thought, — waiting for him to begin. She was a wise mother in that she had never forced the confidence of her children, and yet she had always had it through her love for them and through the trust she had made it a practice to put in them.

At last the boy broke out: "Do you know, mother, I think sis has changed a lot this fall?"

"How do you mean, dear?" asked Mrs. Mansfield.

"Well, I don't exactly know; but she is different. Haven't you noticed it?"

"Perhaps I have, a trifle," and with the admission Mrs. Mansfield let go of a little secret she

had been pondering in her own heart these past few days, without having disclosed it even to her husband.

"Say, I like her better, mother, don't you?"

"Yes, I think she is developing."

"What do you suppose it is that is developing her?" asked the boy.

"Her education, probably," answered the mother, who was quite as much at a loss as the boy had seemed to be.

"I don't believe it. She has only been there about three months this year, and she is a lot more different from what she was at the end of nine months last year."

"Very likely her engagement has something to do with it."

"Well, I don't know. I've been thinking it over, specially since the other morning when I got up earlier than usual and found her gas lighted and I called out 'Hello, sis! What you up to?' and she said 'Come in!' and there she was sitting with her Bible open. I asked, 'What are you doing?' and she said she was having her morning watch and studying some in her Bible. She was awfully red and embarrassed, but I believe she sort of wanted me to know what she was doing. I don't know why, either, but she acted like it; and I thought she wanted to say something to me, but she didn't and I backed out. I have been wondering if that

Miss Holman she talks about has had anything to do with it?"

George saw the color mounting in his mother's face, and he, too, felt a bit queer to be discussing such things. He had never done it before; but Marion had made such a deep impression on him that morning that he had kept his thoughts bottled up about as long as he could.

"I say, mother, if that's what reading the Bible does, guess I'll begin. Why haven't we ever had any of it in our family? Lots of people do."

"Your father is not that kind of man, George," responded the mother while she straightened and grew more reserved as she became more embarrassed. "He is one of the best men that ever lived, but he is not at all demonstrative."

"Yes, dad's all right," thought the boy, "but I wonder, now, if you have to be demonstrative to read the Bible."

"Mother, what is a morning watch?"

"Morning devotions, I suppose, though I never heard the expression."

This conversation that had given Mrs. Mansfield a twinge or two of uneasiness was broken off by Marion's bursting into the room with, "I've brought some one home to luncheon, little mother!"

"Yes, Mrs. Mansfield, will you give a hungry fellow a crust of biscuit?" called out Gene laughingly as he peered over Marion's shoulder.

Mrs. Mansfield, putting on the indulgent

mother's air, met them with the promise, "I'll give you at least some bread and jam, my children. Now, sit down, and don't tease until luncheon is ready."

"Hello, old fellow! What are you doing, lazying around here," as he came over to the couch where George was and gave him a thump or two.

"I at least am not trotting around town with the girls buying a yard of ribbon and two spools of thread," and with this George was getting in his share of thumps.

"You aren't, eh?"

"No, sir, I'm staying home with those of settled, staid purposes and discussing the philosophy of life," rolled out the weighty sentence of the youth.

"Say, brother Gene, I should think Cupid's wings would get sort of frozen up this kind of weather and he wouldn't make any good headway about these regions. How is it? Do you help him along? You don't appear to suffer any inconvenience of tardy visits from him."

"Never mind, my boy. Your time is coming when snow drifts twenty feet high won't be any sort of hindrance to that wily little fellow," laughed Gene.

"Don't you ever think it," said George, as he swelled into the dignity and sobriety of a judge.

While these two were good-naturedly sparring to fill in time, Marion was enthusiastically telling

her mother of some of the purchases she had been making for Santa Claus, whose arrival they were expecting the following night.

Soon the father and the older son came in; after the greeting, luncheon was called. It was a happy family that gathered. Holiday gladness was filling their hearts, and anticipations of the season gave occasion for many a pointed remark made to sharpen wits and arouse curiosity.

At length Christmas Eve came and the same happy family was again gathered. They were circled about the Yule-log burning in the library fireplace. Expectant glances were thrown toward the festive table which had for its center-piece a miniature Christmas tree surrounded at the base by loving remembrances of friends and family. George's Christmas tree had been growing smaller each year; this one, as he expressed it, by its tiny size forebode last appearances. The older ones were children on this evening which held for them not only the Christmas joy, but the cheer of a new member added to the family circle; and thus it happened that an extra celebration was put forth in Gene's honor. George was proxy for Santa Claus.

"Come, George, begin your speech," urged Gene.

"That I will, but I may not get it just straight. Santa Claus was in the middle of his instructions to me when old Cupid stuck his head in between us; and he talked so fast and so busily of his wares

to be presented to-night, that impertinent little rascal, that I got muddled. Perhaps though, Gene, if I get mixed about which belongs to Cupid and which to Santa Claus, you can help me out."

Gene was silenced by the good-humored laughs that came at his expense. The oratorical youth proceeded to parcel out the gifts with appropriate words for each. Marion got her share and opened them all except one which the keen-witted George was not slow to mention.

"Not much, my lady! This is all open play. Out with it,—that little green box of yours that you smuggled away! Suitable for an outside examination anyhow."

"All right!" laughed Marion for she knew she might as well give in first as last when it came to that irrepressible young brother of hers, although Gene had intimated that he wished she would not open the little square box inside the larger package till she was alone.

"Oh!" was all she could say. George danced around her with suggestive remarks, while the parents looked a bit grave, for Mr. Mansfield had given Gene thoroughly to understand that the ring was not to come until Marion had been graduated.

The other brother, Horace, was quietly interested watching various expressions and at the same time Gene's heart was pounding away like a trip hammer. The equilibrium of the former gaiety was regained, however, and the remainder of the

evening was given over to music and a good time till the hour for Gene's departure came, when Mr. Mansfield attempted to give the two young culprits of the past hour a curtain lecture as he followed them into the hall. But they were so much in league that the only satisfaction he could get was a promise from Marion that she would not wear Gene's ring during her college years; and Gene went off happy that she had it anyhow, and so was more securely his.

CHAPTER VII

A TESTING TIME

Marion had returned to college after the holidays, full of joy and courage for the coming months. She had made the resolution during Miss Holman's visit that she would join the Association and that her outward life should not be at variance with her inner, though such a resolution was difficult to carry out. There had been an apparent passiveness in her interests for the Association, which however was only apparent. She had been gathering her forces and praying very earnestly for support to meet the constant wearing that would come from the renewal of the unkind remarks of friends as soon as she actively identified herself with this organization. She had promised her Christ, as well as herself, that she would not only take membership but would offer herself for any work in which she could be used as soon as she returned from home. This would be a good starting point, she had thought. Consequently, when she had made up her mind to take this step, a great burden rolled from her and a

new portion of happiness and strength seemed to be given her. Who has not felt the mill-stone of uncertainty and indecision dragging him down, and has not known the peace and gladness which steal into the heart when decision has been made and rightly made? Thus, although there was a sadness at leaving her dear ones, Marion had an urgent desire to be back among her college friends proving herself equal to the trial, and worthy of the Master's love.

She had arrived Friday evening, and hurried over Saturday morning at the hour in which the president, Ethel Stevenson, was always found in the Association room to see girls. Her feet could not take her too fast, so anxious was she to carry out her intentions; and her heart was thumping itself into prominence in a most vexatious manner. As she came to the door she was not disappointed, for she found Ethel there reading.

"Good morning, Ethel. I've come over to join the Association. Here's my dollar! Now what am I to do?" laughed Marion.

"O Marion, I am so glad you are going to be one of us. Here, sign your name to the constitution in this book."

Marion did it without a word. Then she looked up at Ethel saying in a slightly careless tone, and as if she were handing over a commodity quite apart from herself, "If you ever want to use my

voice at any of your meetings, it is at your service."

Ethel could not help being amused, though she understood thoroughly that it was only a feeling of diffidence that had caused Marion's seeming indifference; and she wanted to answer her, but just then two or three other girls came in and Marion left immediately without Ethel's reply.

"What a pretty, cosy, little room the Y. W. C. A. parlor is," she thought as she walked away. "It is so homelike, and Ethel is a perfect dear to spend so much of her time there to make girls welcome and to help them. I wonder if she talks to them sometimes the way Miss Holman did. I never heard much about it, except that she is always there between eleven-thirty and twelve-thirty; but of course I would not know. What a new world this is to me!"

Saturday evening Ethel came to Marion's room and in the presence of Clara Louise and one or two other friends said: "Marion, will you sing for us to-morrow afternoon at the twilight service?" There was not even a hint at her being disconcerted at making that request before others. Indeed her naturalness gave confidence to Marion who had been longing all day to tell Clara Louise. The dread of the first news had been swept away now, and she was thankful for Ethel's openness.

"Yes, I shall be glad to do so. Is there anything special you want me to sing?"

“No, but the subject is consecration, and the Bible reading is the twelfth chapter of Romans. It is our New Year’s service. We shall appreciate your help more than we can tell. Won’t you come over, girls?” she added as she turned to Marion’s friends. “I think we shall have a long-to-be-remembered hour.”

They gave an indifferent, “Thank you,” as she left, and then one of them, Grace Downer, turned to Marion with a bit of sneer on her face, as she said, “So they have warped you in, have they, Marion?”

“No, Grace, I offered to sing.”

“And that secretarial woman has won you heart and soul.”

Marion didn’t answer this. Florence Perkins who was of milder sort, but quite as persistent, filled in the break by saying, “Hope you are not going to exchange old friends for new ones.”

“I begin to feel chilly already,” added Grace.

Marion laughed at this because she made herself do so, not because she wished to, hoping thus to change the trend of remarks as she said, “You funny children! don’t you ever think I am going to let you go for a moment! Let’s have some chocolate. I learned a new way of making it while I was at home. See if you don’t like it! And these wafers are especially imported from Minneapolis for your aristocratic taste. Don’t you dare say you don’t like them!” She had succeeded in turn-

ing what promised to be a wretched evening into one of natural gaiety for them all. She, however, was living two selves that night: one giving herself up to the entertainment of those about her; the other praying for strength to bear all.

"Why did you do that?" asked Clara Louise of Marion after the girls were gone.

"Do what, dear?"

"Promise to sing for 'Christians.' You know it's going to make things awfully disagreeable for us. I was hoping that you were gradually letting go that idea."

"I am sorry, Clara Louise, that you are not with me in this, but I cannot do differently. I now belong to the Y. W., and I must live up to its duties and privileges, so far as I can."

"Belong! When did you do that?"

"This morning."

"Pshaw! Tell me why."

"I cannot explain to you, Clara Louise; you will not understand. I am going to get a drink. Do you want me to bring you some water, dear?"

"Yes, please," answered Clara Louise, simply nonplused that Marion should wish to go into the Young Women's Christian Association, when she was having such a good time without all that foolishness.

Nothing further was said.

After they separated for the night, Marion sobbed out in the darkness, "O Jesus, is it going

to be so hard? Are they all going to misunderstand me? Help me." That was the only prayer she could offer. Her heart was stunned; she asked herself the same question over and over, "Can those whom I have loved and do love have so much unkindness within themselves, while I have never detected it before? Oh! can they? And toward me?" And then the same little pleading prayer would flutter to her lips again.

Sunday morning as Marion happened to walk past the Association room, she stopped to look at the bulletin outside the door. There she saw her name in the announcement of the afternoon meeting. At first she shuddered to see herself so publicly proclaimed as taking part in the Young Women's Christian Association; then the thought of the song, "Ashamed of Jesus," flashed over her. She straightened up, took a deep breath, and said aloud before she knew it, "No, never!" As she realized what she had said, she cast a frightened look about to see if anyone was near; but no one heard and she walked away relieved.

In the afternoon before the meeting Marion shut herself in her little bedroom for a half hour or more. As she came out to go over to the chapel, she stopped at the mail-slide to drop in a note that she held in her hand. It was to Miss Holman, and read as follows:

"My very dear Friend: The struggle is severe. I need your prayers. This afternoon I sing

my first song for Christ in the Association. I have sung in chapel many times, but never before have I sung for Him. I feel very weak. Is it cowardly to feel so?

"The cutting remarks are hard to bear, more so than I had thought they would be, for I haven't you near me now, but I want the assurance of your prayers. You need not answer. I know you are very busy, and I am sure without word from you, that as soon as this note reaches you, your heart will turn to God for me.

"From one who loves you and depends on you,
"Marion."

As she let the note slip into the box, she felt the prayer was answered already; and she went into the chapel willing to stand criticism, if that must be.

The service was a strong one. The spirit of God was in the listeners as well as in the leader, Mary Palmer, who was one of the splendid girls of the college. The sincerity and sweet influence of her personality shone through each word of her talk. After her prayer, she asked Marion to give the closing thought through the song she was to sing for them,—the song entitled, "A Clean Heart."

Marion had had the comfort of Miss Holman's love and encouragement through the entire meeting; but as she came to the platform and looked down into the sea of faces, she saw only one, that of the

crucified Christ, who had suffered all for her, — the Christ who had been caring for her these twenty-one years, and for whom she was now rendering her first little service. The thought of His waiting love paralyzed her voice at first, and the accompanist, who looked up surprised as she played through the entire hymn before Marion could gain control, was relieved from her anxiety as she started a second time, to hear the clear, sure voice that she knew so well clothing the words of the song in its own mellowness. Marion was living each thought as she poured it forth:

“One thing I of the Lord desire,” and then the plea of her heart —

“O make me clean, O make me clean!
So wash me, Thou, without, within,
Or purge with fire, if that must be.
No matter how, if only sin
Die out in me.”

As she sang her way through the verses, it was as if she were offering the prayer of her new life. There was scarcely a dry eye in the room as she finished. She left the chapel by the side door and wandered out into the silence of the evening, while the girls quietly slipped away under the influence not only of Marion's uplifting interpretation of the song but also of the benediction of the last Sabbath rays as they lighted up the beautiful face and gave a glimpse of the intent expression of

seeking, pictured there. Ethel with two or three Association girls went directly to her room to thank the Father for that song. They had not dared to speak to Marion as she hurried from them; but they could pray.

Marion started out to the pine walk; as soon as she found herself completely screened by its all-embracing arms she broke out into sobs that shook her from head to foot. The prayer came again and again: "O my God, I do mean that — 'Make me clean, no matter how. Purge with fire, if that must be.' " And then, "Dear Father, I can't thank you enough that you let me sing for you to-day. O help me to be sincere in every word and never, never to sing for you what I do not mean!" The cold soon drove her into a brisk walk, and then back to her room, where she was glad to find herself alone. She did not go down to supper that evening; she was not sure enough of her self-control to throw off the sarcasm that might await her. "Is it cowardly?" she repeatedly asked herself. She could not answer that question, but she did know that she could not face opposition just now.

The fact that Marion Mansfield had sung that afternoon, and that she had sung in the way she did, caused more than one girl who had heard her to think seriously of what it meant to belong to Christ. She had been the ideal college girl to a large number of freshmen. They admired not only her beauty, but her happy careless

attitude toward everything, an attitude which they had sometimes imitated to their own class-room detriment; for although they could put on the carelessness, they did not all have the same aptitude for getting lessons quickly that Marion had. Some of those who had gone that day to hear her sing came out with a new revelation of her, a revelation that made them talk less and think more.

Ethel and her room-mate, Milfred Morton, had a long talk about Marion that night.

“Milfred, I have been praying for Marion ever since she first came to college; and to think, at last, my prayers are answered! She will be such a help, for she has a wonderful hold on the freshmen, and some upper class-men, too, for that matter. She is so whole-hearted in all that she undertakes that I know she will soon be one of our most active workers; but we musn’t hurry her.”

“It seemed so unappreciative in us, Ethel, to let her go from the meeting alone this afternoon.”

“No, dear, it wasn’t that. She felt appreciated in the way every one gave attention to the song. But Milfred, although I longed with all my heart to rush right to her, I didn’t dare. You saw how she hurried from us. I started to her, but as she turned to go out I saw something in her face that made me draw back; I don’t know what it was, but I recognized that she wanted to be alone. This is going to be a very hard time for her; all her intimate friends have interests in such opposite

directions, that I fancy they will oppose her rather vigorously. I do want to be near her to help, but she is not the kind of girl that one goes to easily. There is a real reserve about her inner life that I should never approach, unless she asked me. She is open-hearted and free, ready to do for anybody, yet there is a part of herself that she never gives out. I believe that to-day she gave out more of that inner heart-feeling than she had ever done in all her life; that was why she was so broken up at the end. Yes, it will be a struggle; but I fear her nature is such that she will never let another come to her side; she will have to fight alone. She did talk to Miss Holman, but there is only one Miss Holman. We can pray for her, Milfred, and we must do it constantly; and too, we can let her feel our sympathy in little ways without telling her. I know she would like that, if she could accept it without any open response on her part."

"O Ethel, I wish I knew her even as well as you do. I could have known her, if I had only gone with you to call on her last year; but I was afraid that she would not like me. I knew that I couldn't help loving her."

While Ethel and Milfred were discussing Marion, she was once more in the midst of a circle of friends, in her room. One or two had asked somewhat suspiciously if she had had a good meeting; she had given a simple affirmative, but she was spared further allusions to the matter. She consid-

ered it a gracious provision that the friction had not been more prominent that night when she was so ill prepared for it.

The coming week was one of almost unbearable pressure. Grace Downer had come chirping in Friday night, and asked her, before a crowd of girls, if she couldn't come down to the parlor to give them some good, old, jolly songs; but then she had stopped abruptly and raising her brows added, — "unless your *repertoire* is entirely religious now."

Marion had summoned the same little laugh that had served as a curtain to her feelings so many times already, choked down the hurt, and answered cheerily, "Of course I will. What do you want me to sing, Grace?" Grace had picked out her songs somewhat surprised and disappointed that her insinuations had not caused remonstrance.

So the days were passing, each with its individual stings for Marion, until she came to look forward to their pain. Every morning she rose early for her quiet hour in which to gain help for the day's temptation; and every night she went to bed thankful that another day had passed and she had been able to hide her sufferings; for the daily fear that she brought to her God was that she would some time give way before her companions. He gave her, however, the grace to conquer, and to pass unnoticed the unkind words. This baffled her

friends though they believed in the end that they would win.

One of the hard things to bear was the silence, the coolness, with which Virginia treated her these days; and, too, her own Clara Louise acted almost afraid of her.

Many nights did Marion go to her rest with aching heart and hunger for love. To be cast out was a new experience to her. Everybody had always loved her; now the lack of love was almost more than she could stand; for she had constantly depended on the love of friends and their approval and trust. Even from the time when she was a little babe, a frown had caused her to look away. How often had she cried out in her anguish, "If I could only feel her arms around me as I did that day she told me to turn to Christ alone who understands; and then if I could only cry it all out on her shoulder, as I did that day, I know that I could meet their sneers more easily! But O my Miss Holman, why are you so far away? You say, 'Look to Christ,' but sometimes He, too, is far away, and I crave the human touch." Then she would invariably end in prayer, — "Yes, I know it is all my fault, my Father. You are always near. Help me to feel you so. You have kept me truly these last days, and oh, I thank you!"

Marion had been asked again to sing at the Sunday service, two weeks from the time she had previously sung. She came to her room the middle

of the morning, the Thursday before, and found there the note of request. She had torn the page off the door-pad and gone in, hoping that no one else had read the message. She dropped down on the couch, rested her head in her hands and almost prayed that this would not be required of her. "Father, it is so hard. If I could only do something less conspicuous until I have more strength to bear their sarcasm," she moaned. She heard the quick step of the girl with the mail coming down the hall and had time only to get up and turn toward the window, before the door was thrown open, the letters dropped on the desk near by, and the door again closed. She went to see if there was anything for her; the first letter she caught sight of was one in Miss Holman's writing. Unconsciously a prayer of gratitude filled her heart as she turned from the little parlor into her own bed-room, closing the door that she might without interruption drink in the love, the encouragement that she knew would be there. When she sat down she looked at the letter a moment before opening it, saying as she held it in her hands, "Oh, I never needed you so much!" She found this message:

"My dear, dear Marion, — I am many miles from you, here in Denver; but believe me my heart is with you. Your letter came this morning. I cannot tell you how I long to be near you, dear, to comfort you; but my work forbids. I can only send you a letter to tell you I do not forget. I well

know how long are these days of misunderstanding with your friends; but I also know they will end and those whose love is worthy of you will cling all the more closely to you when they realize that you are true to your convictions. I cannot tell you to put these friends out of your mind, for I know from experience that such is impossible and also wrong. But, Marion, I do urge you to look to the precious Christ who was misunderstood for an entire lifetime that you and I might have the blessing of to-day. Can't you, dear one, stand it for a few months for Him, and for girls around you who may come to Him through your example? Doesn't it make it easier when you look at all He has endured for you, even to His death?

"You will not shrink, I believe, from these experiences, full of pain though they be, if they make you a co-worker with Him, preparing you to do for Him what He cannot do — to be a girl among girls who can give them the Christ touch through the human channel, which is the only means He has, oftentimes, of reaching the indifferent, the hardened. No, Marion, dear, you will not fall short of Jesus's purpose for you, even though the schooling be hard. I have every confidence in you.

"One thing more, those girls who shun you now or who laugh at you, instead of with you as they used to do, are not so unfeeling as you think. They are accustomed to looking upon Christians as freaks, alas! and it is because of their love for you

that they are treating you so, that they may prevent you from joining such an unpopular class of people. I feel sorry for them because they have allowed their love to become a mistaken tool for cruelty, degrading the rarest thing in their hearts and being themselves pulled after it. It is from misunderstanding and ignorance that they have taken this position. Prove to them that they can never reach the true development of womanhood without Christ; that they can never get the most out of life, and appreciate this wonderful world of ours till they have the Master as its center; that their education, their money, their all, counts for naught unless the Savior is back of them; that it is not the freak, but the woman of wisdom who bears the name of Christian. I doubt not you can show them now in the silent, little ways of manners and deeds. Words would do more harm than good, but be assured that the girls are watching your every expression, and that no kind thought, no kind act will go to waste. They see all. May I send you Second Corinthians, chapter twelve, the ninth and tenth verses?

“Dear Marion, the Father has brought me another gift — your love, and I treasure it as from Him. It is sacred to me. I am glad to call you ‘Marion,’ my Marion, for love has made it so. I may not write as often as I want to, because it has pleased the Father to crowd my life, each day, very full of girls who need help, and my time is not

my own. This is a precious privilege for Him, and I ask you to pray with me that I may always be worthy of it; but though it keeps me often from writing, it never keeps me from loving and remembering. You are constantly in my prayers.

"I am hoping to see you at the Geneva Conference this year. Please begin to plan to come.

"With tender love,

"Ruth Holman."

This letter was not only a balm, but it renewed in Marion the desire to consecrate her life. She now had a new thought given her, that of working for her companions instead of striving to protect herself against them. This, in the future, meant more to her spiritual growth than she could estimate, for it necessitated her forgetting herself and planning constantly for others in the hours that she had formerly spent in tears and in almost giving up. To say that the tears and heart-aches never came would be untrue, for the strongest cannot always be on the mountain top. All are human, and hurts do make themselves felt. It was true, however, that when Marion found that she was a co-worker with Christ for these particular girls, His inspiration was greater, and the times of discouragement were more easily passed over. Her songs in the meetings of the months that followed lifted many an anxious heart to a better life.

While this spiritual strain was sapping her vitality, a heart-problem was also presenting serious

difficulties. During the weeks after the holidays, Jack Casey had been making frequent visits to the college. His manner toward her was frank, she had told herself, and she could not see that he showed any special interest in her. He was equally glad to chat with Virginia. All emphasis in regard to his liking her particularly had been made by Virginia alone, as far as she could detect. There was no plausible reason for her to refuse to see him; besides she enjoyed his geniality, and, too, she liked to sing with him. The trouble was what would Gene think of it? He was so far away, had never seen Mr. Casey, and wouldn't understand. Which would be worse: to tell Gene and run the risk of causing him to suffer, or to keep all this from him, or to offend both Virginia and Mr. Casey by refusing to accept his calls? This last she knew would justly bring upon herself the criticism of assuming more than was warranted. At last she decided to go on as she had been doing: receiving his visits of good-fellowship in the same spirit she felt he had offered them, without saying anything to Gene. This might prove a dangerous course, but it would be, she argued to herself, the safest and happiest way for her. That Mr. Casey had brought one or two pieces of music with him, whenever he came to sing with her, was surely natural enough, and that he left them was the only thing that he could do. The questions were put aside as an-

swered entirely to her satisfaction once for all, she said, while the months of hard work were passing on, frequently brightened for both her and Virginia by the cheerful spirits of Jack Casey.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ASSOCIATION

Soon after Marion's entering the Association, she was asked to be on the social committee; and it was here that she began to realize the practical side of Christian living, for she had the good fortune to be under a chairman who, through Miss Holman's visit, had come to penetrate the spiritual possibilities in the college social relationships. Marion's quick, receptive mind and heart grasped the significance of the work which the social committee could do for Christ, and reached out into visions of larger things. "The fellowship committee, ah! that was it, how true!" she had thought. "I have felt so weak, but this promise is sure: 'God is faithful who hath called you into the fellowship of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.' And that's what I'll do. He is faithful, He will always stand by, no matter how hard it is; and when I shrink, still He is faithful. Oh, help me never again to be ashamed to speak of Thee for Thou art so faithful to me! And then wilt Thou give

me the privilege of carrying out the second part of that verse in Thy name: to call others into fellowship with *Thy* Son, *Thy Son*, no servant, no distant acquaintance, not even a near friend, but Thy beloved Son, Thy chosen. O make me worthy, Father! Thou hast given me in Miss Holman the most precious gift of friend; and now wilt Thou show me how to give Thee many friends, as a member of the social committee in expression of my gratitude to Thee." Such had been her meditations after the first committee meeting which she attended.

At that little meeting the chairman, Helen Meyer, had spoken especially to her girls of their personal responsibility in their social work. Love, she had called the key-word of the fellowship committee; then she had asked them again to look into the power of their committee and its consequent advantage over many of the other committees in reaching students, for its special interest was fellowship, a word which gives access to any girl's heart. All care for it, all long for it, while some committees, such as the mission study or the Bible study or the devotional meeting have not that which appeals to every girl from the start. "Many girls," she continued, "do not care a snap of the finger for mission study; they do not look into their Bibles from one week's end to the other; girl after girl seems absolutely averse to religious meetings; but who

does not want to be loved; who will turn away the appeal of love? Just here is our advantage; hence our heavier responsibility to reach a larger number than the others. We are the committee to love girls into doing the right, and as Miss Holman says, 'You can love a whole lot of girls into doing things when you can win them in no other way.' Girls, we have a large work before us as the fellowship committee, fellowship which must rest in love, the broadest committee of the whole Association. And now in these last two months of our administration, for you see we go out of office in March, may we not concentrate as much as possible upon our personal efforts to win girls through our fellowship into the Association and unto Christ? There are ten of us on the committee. If we might each of us these next eight weeks win five girls that would mean fifty; wouldn't that be splendid?"

The girls caught the enthusiasm of this leader; and could one have seen the inspiration beaming from their expectant faces, one would have had a rare life experience. Such ambassadors in behalf of Christ! And why should they not conquer?

"One thing more," added Helen. "You know we have some organization work in a small way on hand. I mean the candy sale at the next Hall Play to help out the finance committee. We hope to help them make about twenty dollars that night. Will you all come over for a joint meeting with the finance committee to-morrow afternoon at four?"

After a prayer circle the girls separated and turned their thoughts to the various duties that were claiming them.

"Well," thought Helen Meyer, "I've just come to the place now where I feel they are in good working order. They are beginning to see what they ought to be and do as social committee members; and I am beginning to see what I ought to be and do. We are amalgamating and becoming more of a unified force, but in about eight weeks we have to stop — time's up. It seems to me that most of our year has been a great, rambling failure. I wonder why it takes a whole year to learn to begin. I suppose we would have been floundering yet, if Miss Holman had not come along to point a way out. But this isn't very profitable — worrying over the past. It would be better to be looking into the means of making these next weeks count. My! what a fine committee man Marion Mansfield is going to make! Wonder how she would do for chairman next year? Rather new; perhaps I ought to be a little more conservative; yet everybody loves her; she seems ideal to me."

Marion's resolutions had been forming to get five of her own friends into the Association in the next eight weeks. That would not be one a week. Easy! But when she thought of approaching some of them on the subject, each girl loomed up before her like Vesuvius smoking violently with warning of an outburst. She had decided to begin on her

own room-mate, who had been somewhat subdued lately, and that night she tried to say something about its meaning so much to her to be in the Association; but it was up-hill work, for Clara Louise wasn't ready to help her out a bit. In fact she listened with that suppressed indifference which ends mentally with the interrogation which means so much and says so little — "Well?" and her attitude added, "And when you're through, I am."

Poor Marion! It was with aching disappointment that she went to bed that night, and with a burden of prayer in her heart that she might love Clara Louise into her own new life in Christ.

The next day she started out with her five girls in mind; somehow it all seemed so queer, for now she had a new motive in loving girls — love them that she might love them into loving Christ. She realized that she had loved people selfishly heretofore. It came as a shock to her. She had actually been loving because it was the easiest way, the pleasantest way for her to live, because she — wanted — people — to love her; and all the love that had been given her had stopped right in her own heart. *To pass it on to Christ*, had never occurred to her. That even her affections belonged to Him and His service was a new revelation. She was startled away from her own love for people as something unclean, full of selfish desires, a sin. The sentence, "That ye may love one another even as I have loved you," rang in her ears over and over. Then came the

prayer from her heart: "O Father, make me clean! My Christ, purify my love that it may be like unto yours. It is your gift to me. I have abused it. Oh, take it back and make it worthy. All is yours — my friends, my loves, my all. They are only put in my keeping. Help me to cherish them as such for you."

At four o'clock that afternoon, the finance and social committees met jointly for the consideration of the candy sale; and the meeting was handled with much dispatch, for each girl took her share of the responsibility. In the course of an hour, when they adjourned, they felt that all details were well in hand, and that every thing was promising success in this minor enterprise. The girls caught the inspiration of the meeting and of the fellowship of the joint work, for they had had the prayer touch and the Christ presence, so that they went out with a new joy in their service.

Marion had gone out with something additional. She had a queer feeling in her throat, a quick, catching throb in her heart, for she had discovered a new girl. Why it had taken her all year to find her, she could not see; why nobody else had marked her, she could not understand. The girl was unusual in appearance and manners: tall, good in proportion, dignified in bearing, a girl of quiet strength and any amount of reserve force, splendid material for college athletics; moreover, she had an indescribable charm that had won Marion's love

and given the funny little twitch to her heart strings.

“Yes,” Marion mused as she went away, “a hidden treasure. But what am I saying? The Association people have found her out. This shows how separate our worlds have been. I haven’t been in the habit of counting them; and now they are rapidly coming to absorb my little world. But I don’t see why they have not brought her more to the front of things! Seems to me they don’t appreciate her worth. She’s a freshman, she said. Well, I’m going to know her, that’s all. Her quiet reserve, though, almost frightens me off. Still that smile of hers brings assurance; it is like the happiest gleam of the spring-tide that makes all the little flowers laugh for joy and shake their tiny heads. It warms a body’s heart into joyous laughter. It breaks out so suddenly all over her face, too, just as generous as she is in all her make-up. I’ll warrant her sympathies are deep and that her heart is big; only she seems sort of afraid to show what she feels. Why should I say that? I don’t know her; never saw her before, and here I am spinning a great yarn about her. I liked her suggestions; they were so to the point, practical, and business-like; but her freshman modesty kept her from saying half the things I wanted to hear her say. What a fascinating pronunciation she has! It isn’t quite Eastern

and it isn't Southern. Her musical voice sounds English."

"Starting out for 'ex,' my Mary, and what are you thinking about? Looks mighty interesting. May I ask?" assailed Virginia, as she caught up with Marion strolling across the campus. "Let's have a little walk and talk. I'm positively hungry for it. Do you know we haven't had a 'confidential' for ages?"

Virginia told the truth more than Marion guessed when she said she had been hungry for it. A question had been burning in her heart for several months; but she dared not, she could not, get up courage to put it. Marion always shied the track whenever she ventured anything about Jack Casey. Again, however, she started in, "And now let's hear all about it."

"There she goes! Did you ever see her before Virginia?"

"Who?"

"That girl, walking across there to the glen!"

"No! Who is she? How splendidly she takes her way through the field! Looks as if she intended to do something. But who is she, and where did you see her?"

"She's a freshman. Her name is Elizabeth Field; and I met her in the committee meeting this afternoon."

"What meeting?"

"The Y. W. finance-social committee."

"Oh!" deprecated Virginia. "So it's a Y. W. crush, is it? Well, just let me tell you that for Marion Mansfield to have crushes isn't becoming. It is for the other one to have the sensation, not for Marion."

"It's not a crush, Virginia. Don't, please. I like her and I am going to know her better. She's worth it; she's a general; she didn't say much, but what she did say shows that she was meant to lead. What I don't understand is that she has not led more in freshman affairs, and in athletics, and in Y. W. Something seems to keep her back; I'd like to know what. All the girls, seemed to like her and wanted to listen to her suggestions. There is something back of it, though. Going off alone! Wonder if she likes to be alone. Yet she is jolly and several times broke out into the merriest laugh this afternoon. I wish you could see her smile; but just wait. You go with me to call upon her."

"To tell the truth, I think I'd like to," responded Virginia thoughtfully.

"Virginia, do you know that you and I and the rest of our friends are missing a whole lot out of our college life? We don't know enough people well. We're selfish."

"I don't think so at all," unsympathetically replied Virginia; "you can't know every one of a thousand girls. You have to have some personal friends."

“Yes, you need personal friends, but you don’t have to have exclusive friends.”

These words of Marion’s caused Virginia to pause a moment; there was some truth in them, but they irritated her. Her little sophomore had been mixing up too much with those Association girls lately; and though Virginia’s better self recognized the right in it, she could not be reconciled yet to seeing Marion give herself to so many people. Marion was rare and she wanted to keep her as a handle-not, touch-not friend, so far as the student body was concerned. Heretofore, she had enjoyed feeling that her Mary was the possession of the few, her own possession in particular; and it certainly was distracting to see her made so common among the girls. Virginia knew that Marion had had exclusive friendships up to this time and that she had had them without thinking one way or another about it; but now that her eyes were open to the unwisdom of such a course her senior counsellor knew quite as well that there was no turning her from her conclusions. Virginia felt herself losing hold of Marion, and it was heart sickening. If she had only realized that her hold had been superficial she could have found a remedy more quickly; but instead of looking into the cause she became a bit petulant and coercive, a course of action which did not count for any length of time.

Marion, meanwhile, was thinking, “I’ve gained

one point, anyhow: she's willing to know Elizabeth Field, a recognized Y. W. girl whom I have met through Association circles."

"An exchange of the old for the new, Marion. I've been watching it coming on and it's sort of hard on a body, especially if a body cares as I do." Here Virginia choked down a lump, while of Marion's arm which slipped around her she took no notice, but continued: "Every Mary Jane in college is pulling you off to one side, now-a-days; and it is by mere chance that your former acquaintances get you at all. The trouble of it is," she blurted out, "you're so happy in it all." For that last sentence she was sorry; it showed too plainly pique and selfishness, and she knew that it did.

Marion drew her friend down beside her, beneath a friendly pine, saying nothing while Virginia covered her eyes with a handkerchief, for she couldn't keep the tears back.

At last came a low voice, "I love you, Virginia, and I *always* shall. I am happy, but I want you to share my happiness; it would mean so much more to me then. Won't you enter into *my* joy and let it be *our* joy in Christ's work, here? I have never known real living until the last three months, and this living has been and is preparing me to be a better friend, — to have a truer love for you than ever before, instead of less, as you fear, Virginia. This social committee is fitting me to be to you what I never could have been without it. I am

waiting for you to come with me. You haven't many more months here, in old X. C. Won't you believe me when I tell you that that which has been given me is worth putting into these months for you?" She waited.

At last Virginia said without looking at her, "Christ is not real. He has never been in my life. He has never proved Himself to me. There is a God in nature, but I am not sure but that Christ is beautiful fiction. How can I give much time or weight to such uncertainties?"

"Virginia, if you found out to-day, to-morrow, next week, that Christ is a certainty both as the only begotten Son of God and also as Deity, would you start out immediately to work with all your strength for Him, here in Exmoor College, to win girls to Him?"

A long silence followed. Virginia was honest in her silence. Finally came "Yes," slowly, and then a quick, "I don't know."

"You aren't honest in your questioning, then, Virginia."

A sob came. "I'd be ashamed, after these years of indifference, suddenly to possess convictions and to be religious, I, a senior, to have been wrong so long—" Another sob cut her sentence short.

"O my Virgie! that's it; you would be ashamed. Your pride would mar your life and His.

I say this reverently. Virginia, Virginia, do be sincere with yourself and with God."

Her companion looked up and said, "I will be honest, not a coward, but stand for the truth as I see it."

What joy Christ must have had, looking down upon His loyal, little messenger, as she bent over her friend to kiss her and to say, "Oh, I knew the best would conquer."

The tears still falling, Virginia continued, "But why, if Christ is what you say He is, has He let me be in the dark and so indifferent all these years?"

"You are what you *will* to be, Virginia. I fear you have willed to let Him alone and spend no time with Him. Miss Holman says, 'To know people we must spend time with them; and to know Christ we must be with Him.' May I ask, are you a Bible student?"

"No! Clara Louise says you read your Bible every day. It seems to take moral courage for me to do that and I don't see why."

"I wish you knew Miss Holman, Virginia."

"I'd rather know you."

Another pause followed. It was broken by, "Marion, you are the first person in all this world that ever revealed to me that I wasn't sincere. It had been such a comfortable cushion for me to rest upon: the saying 'You're all right just so you are sincere.' But I wasn't sincere, even."

“Do you know Miss Holman proved to me that statement was false? Her illustration was: ‘Suppose a man went into a drug store with a prescription to be filled and that the druggist, compounding it upon his sincerity rather than upon his knowledge got it wrong and caused the death of some one. The druggist’s sincerity would not save him before the law, for he would be held culpable for not knowing what was within his power to know.’ So our sincerity will not save us, but we are held culpable for not knowing that which is put within our possibility to know. God would never leave us in doubt about so vital a thing as whether we were worshiping man or discrediting God in our attitude to Christ, provided we take the revelation He puts within our reach.”

“I guess it’s time for me to read my Bible and find out what is there for me. I have always been a church member, it seems to me; but somehow I have found it so much easier to drift and to talk about sincerity than to have convictions. Marion, I do honestly believe in Christ; I know I do, when I come right down to it; but I am not very well acquainted with Him. I’ve never had real, hard doubts; I’ve just let them slide around me and have not bothered. I suppose when I get down to it I’ll find some puzzling questions,” she said thoughtfully.

“We must be going back; it’s late; but Vir-

ginia, won't you go into the Association? It's the only organization here which stands for Christ."

"Yes, I will; but I tell you, Marion, it is not an easy thing to do. You know my pride," she laughed with surprise at her own frankness and decision, while Marion burst out,

"Oh, I'm too happy for words! And then, Virginia, you'll help me get some of the other girls in; won't you? We'll just work together."

"I don't know about that. I can't take more than one step at a time. I'll try to do what you want me to do, but just now I'll have to take a while to get myself straightened out before I can do much for others."

"Yes, dear, but don't get the wrong proportions. I did at first, and I was growing to be self-centered and selfish. The sooner you can begin to do for others the more quickly will you come to understand clearly."

Marion and Virginia went back to the college in silence; and with a simple "Good bye," they separated, each to go to her own room.

"And now, if Clara Louise would only yield," thought Marion as she opened the door.

The night for the Hall Play had come. The Association girls were hurrying about, setting their wares in order. Elizabeth Field who had charge of getting the supplies together and parcelling them out into sacks was working quietly and directing

the girls as Marion came over to "Phil." Hall to report herself ready for service.

As Marion turned to ask Elizabeth, "And now what can I do?" she had noticed a modest reserve yet quiet assurance as Elizabeth told her that she would be glad to have her help prepare the popcorn bags. The girls were working hard, but nobody seemed out of sorts. There was such a free and easy jollity about it that all things were moving on and really being accomplished. Marion soon detected that Elizabeth Field was the happy spirit who kept everybody at it with no falling away of the minutes and at the same time dealt out in generous quantities the good humor.

"She's a captain, isn't she?" remarked Angie Howard, one of the finance girls, as she saw Marion watching Elizabeth.

"Yes, she is," emphasized Marion; "and she seems to do it all so unobtrusively. One would scarcely know the responsibility is hers. With what delicacy she asks the girls to do things!"

"Yes," continued Angie, "and everybody loves to do for her. I just love her. She is one of Helen Meyer's favorites. Helen told me aside that she had great confidence in her and that she wanted to give her a trial to-night. 'Tisn't very often you see upper classmen working so willingly under a freshman; is it?"

"No, it's her personality. She is so wholesome it does one good to be around her; and some-

thing about her makes one feel that she is a veritable steam engine to push through to success anything that she undertakes."

"You know, this pop-corn scheme is hers," said Angie, doubly happy that she was talking to Marion Mansfield whom she had secretly adored for two years but never had had courage to approach, and that she was talking of one over whom she had been increasingly enthusiastic for the last several months.

"I was surprised to find it here. Does she think that pop-corn will sell better than candy?"

"Oh, no! But it will help sell the candy. She suggested it to Helen because of the tempting odor; and when the crowd begins to come down here in the Hall, we are going to have the gas stove going and pop for all we're worth and for odor. This will make everybody hungry," laughed Angie. "We are going to pop for the tempting of those to whom we are to sell this candy we're getting ready."

"She must be equal to anything," warmly asserted Marion, while her merry laugh rang out so cheerily that Elizabeth, on the other side of the room glanced up with the reflection of the same merriment as she questioningly looked at Marion.

What Elizabeth was thinking about just then nobody knew, but true it was that she had been thinking of Marion Mansfield; yet as she looked into Marion's face she turned quickly away abashed

at the audacity of her thoughts when she remembered that this was the girl she had been considering.

Marion was equally embarrassed as she resumed her work, wondering a bit but not understanding.

The evening was a successful one. The play was prettily done, the parts artistically carried, and the pop-corn and candy were rapidly consumed.

Between the acts Elizabeth would call out cheerily, "Brisk with our advertising, girls," and they knew that meant pop-corn.

More than one girl whispered the inquiry, "Who is the tall girl with the splendid physique, managing the Y. W. sale?" and with surprise they had wondered how she could have been kept in the back-ground all the year. Meanwhile, Helen Meyer sat in the back of the room taking charge of the cash table, proud as she dared be of her prodigy of the evening.

Elizabeth, unconscious of her conspicuousness, was the one whom the girls insisted on sending up to the Faculty rows and the guest seats. As she graciously suggested to them that they might enjoy a bit of the sweets, the few scattered men who held the sacred privilege of witnessing a college Hall play, namely the Faculty men, declared that there was no use trying to refuse when she came around, she seemed so sure of doing them a favor by bringing them her wares.

The evening closed with the Association forty

dollars richer and Elizabeth Field on the dangerous verge of popularity, even though she had the leading *rôle* in only a candy sale.

After Marion and Clara Louise had come from the play and had comfortably settled down in their lounging robes for the discussion of the evening's events, Clara Louise asked of Marion, "Who was that magnificent looking girl with whom you seemed to be on such familiar terms?"

"Elizabeth Field. Isn't she fine?"

"She's charming! What bewitching, fluffy, brown hair she has. Never saw a shirt-waist sit so attractively on anyone as it does on her; a shirt-waist girl, rather severe in her style and yet with a sensitive, womanly charm about her."

"Clara Louise, come into Y. W. and I'll show you a lot of fine girls," said Marion while her heart was going pit-a-pat, as she listened to see how Clara Louise would receive her remark.

"There is one thing sure, Marion, I'll say this for your Y. W: you have seemed awfully happy since you went into it."

"Clara Louise, won't you be in it with me? I never was so happy in my life before; and oh, I want my little room-mate to share it with me; I do!"

"No, Marion, I don't believe it is for me. I am quite content as I am."

"Well, you don't look it," answered Marion gravely.

Clara Louise peered uneasily into her face, turned away, and said she guessed she'd go to bed.

Marion came to her saying, "Clara Louise, I shall not give you up."

"Thank you, Marion," she said as she turned leaving her room-mate in perplexity.

Marion went to her own room feeling assured that she had made some progress, for Clara Louise was not so openly opposed. "I believe I can use Elizabeth Field to help win her," she mentally commented, "and I wonder for what she thanked me." Soon she fell asleep with the satisfaction that after all her life was really counting.

CHAPTER IX

THE TWENTY-SECOND OF FEBRUARY

One Thursday afternoon several girls were gathered in Jane Bashford's room busy as bees with their tongues as well as their fingers, when they heard some one briskly walk up to the door, stop perfectly still, and again start down the hall at the same pace. Virginia hopped up with, "May be it's some one we want, girls."

As she opened the door to follow the receding steps, one of the girls remarked, "If it were, she'd knock over the 'Engaged' and come in, for she would know what we are doing."

That formidable "Engaged" sign posted outside the door was enough to deter any caller. In about a minute, however, Virginia came back dragging the reluctant Marion, who, red and laughing, was pretty in her embarrassment.

"I made her come into this sanctum upon a sworn oath of secrecy, because I knew her ingenuity would help us out with our bell perplexity," explained Virginia, confidently.

It was time that Marion was confused. Though she knew quite well the six or eight seniors there gathered, to walk in over a senior's "Engaged" sign was not usual, even though another senior brought her; and then since her active interest in Association affairs some of the girls gathered here had been a trifle shy of her.

As she entered they looked up with a shadow of restraint on their faces, a fact which caused her a few uncomfortable twinges; but she happily adapted herself as some of them urged, "Do come to the rescue of our liberty bell; we simply can't make it work."

"Liberty bell!" exclaimed Marion, "it looks to me more like a bird cage."

Amidst peals of laughter the girls assured Marion that that was the trouble: the more they worked to make a bell, the more they wrought a bird cage, and the less courage they had to refashion it into a liberty bell.

"What's it for, girls, anyway?" asked Marion, her face a blank.

"Little sophomores should ask no questions, but just go ahead to help out their dignified, older sisters; but then, I'll whisper to you, my meek little maiden, that George was born, oh, any number of years ago to-morrow and we have to help celebrate his birthday by swinging the liberty bell," noddingly assured Jean Brown.

"If the bell doesn't persist in being a common,

every day cage," laughed Marion, in the spirit of the hour. Her self-consciousness was absorbed in the ridiculous pathos of it all. She saw that poor, harmless bird cage in disrepute because it wouldn't be a liberty bell wrapped in yards of grey bunting that looked like its swaddling clothes, while the girls stood around in dismay, tired, and almost disgusted, the horrid thing was so unwieldy.

Meanwhile they had an audience of laughing girls who can always furnish free applause and encouragement and useless suggestions, as well as jokes when they themselves are not in the pinch. Their own work was progressing finely; they had been stringing fire-crackers.

"Give me that paper of pins," cheerily requested Marion; "I'll fix it. You are too painstaking, that's all the trouble," and they gladly fell back, resigned their positions to watch Marion's deft, artistic fingers actually bring the semblance of a bell out of the bungling mass.

"Bravo, Marion!" said Grace Downer as she saw it coming into form with Marion's tight pull of the cloth here, and a twist at a puff there to bring in the required curves. "You always could do what you took a notion to do. Mighty glad you came along." This from one who had most bitterly criticised Marion made the heart of the successful girl leap for joy.

"And now you deserve to know all," exclaimed Virginia as she swung the finished product into

the air with the cry, "Isn't it fine, girls!" at the same time explaining, "It's this way. You see to-morrow night each senior table, and there are twenty, has to represent some public event in George Washington's life; our lot is to represent the Declaration of Independence. Just be on hand, and you will see some of the great events of history pass before your eyes."

"That's a fact, Marion," reinforced Jane Bashford. "You want to get some one to invite you over to Main dining-room for dinner to-morrow evening."

"I think girls," proposed Jean Brown. "we'll have to see to that to pay Marion for helping us out so beautifully."

"Do you know, there is one problem at our table," confided Virginia, as she worked away at the fire-cracker string, "Viola Smith has brought from home a Martha Washington gown all ready for Washington festivities; and she declares now that she will not be a man: she is going to wear that dress, no matter what we represent."

"That will spoil the whole thing! There were no women in the Declaration of Independence," said Jane.

"No! Wish there had been," emphatically announced Grace Downer of strong woman suffrage tendencies.

"Well, I don't know why Viola Smith need be so stubborn! I brought a Washington dress from

home, too; but I am not going to mar the idea of our table by forcing the gown on everybody," was the next remark.

Marion had been quietly listening; but now with a twinkle in her eye she suggested that she had a solution, if she might be allowed to offer it before so august a body.

"Do! do!" came several voices.

"Let her wear her gown and name her Janice Meredith," laughed Marion.

Their faces were blank; it was evident that they didn't see the point.

"Why don't you know?" she questioned. "Janice Meredith was always sticking around in the way and where she wasn't wanted."

"Great! We'll do that and just pay her back." Spunky little Jane was content. "Janice was always hanging around the men," she added looking approvingly up at Marion. And then she began, "Marion, you don't" — but Jane didn't finish, for which Marion was glad and seemed not to notice for she knew too well, from Jane's expression, that the girl had in mind some sarcastic implication and then repressed it, a thing very unusual; for Jane Bashford was known to utter her first thoughts with no second consideration or sparing of people's feelings.

"She was probably going to tell me that I was not so pious as usual; but I don't care. That she didn't say it shows a softening of her attitude, a

coming around a wee bit; and I'm going to keep at her," ran through Marion's mind.

Virginia adroitly changed the subject; and Marion gave her a glance of gratitude to which she responded. The response sent a thrill through Marion's heart, as it was the first time Virginia had ever stood by her under such circumstances.

As they went out the door together a little later, Marion whispered, "I am not alone now, and oh! how it helps!"

"A poor stick, but it's yours," was Virginia's short reply.

Jane stepped to the door and called Marion back: "I am sorry I started to say that, Marion; it wasn't a bit kind. I really didn't intend to, but somehow in your new light you rub me the wrong way though I can't help liking you just the same."

"It's all right, Jane."

"Marion, it is the same old story. I still love you and your fun; I have been afraid these last months I was going to lose the latter; but this afternoon proved that fun is staying by you; and I am glad. I am going to see that you are over here to-morrow afternoon for the dinner."

"Thank you," and Marion went away with a happy heart and a wish, "O that I could only win her! There's a lot of good in Jane, and the Christ would give her the stability and the smoothing off of edges that she so much needs."

The following night, Marion found herself

with many another waiting outside the spacious Main dining-room to watch the costumed procession of seniors as it filed in. First came the President and Mrs. Washington with the cabinet members and their wives; all seated themselves at a sumptuously laid table. Then came the patrons who upheld the dignity of the cherry-tree episode; they seated themselves with small George at a table adorned with the cherry-tree, hatchet, and the favored fruit. Valley Forge found its representation in ten ragamuffins stumbling and seating themselves on cracker-boxes about a table divested of its linen, while the cotton snow fell thick and fast to cover the meager rations. Finally last, but vastly more important, marched in the dignified signers of the Declaration of Independence. Although the previous guests had bestowed a gracious bow upon the Lady Principal and her table who stood in waiting as the dignitaries passed before, this august body of independent aspect and purport had no time for trivial civilities. The demands of a mighty though young nation waking to a realization of its liberties were too heavily fallen upon them to descend to the frivolities of mankind. In single file they came, looking neither to the right nor to the left, quite oblivious of the fact that all preceding them had entered double file; but it was conjectured that their independence needed elbow room. That their severe, black swallow-tailed coats, powdered wigs, black,

silver-buckled slippers, as well as their traditional knee trousers added to their demeanor and enhanced their air of rigid reality, there was no doubt. The one relief to this sombre, impressive line was Miss Janice Meredith who like the other dignitaries wore a placard on her back; and as she led these staid Liberals down the dining room the wave of a smile passed over the on-lookers, for they recognized that she was in her own time and place, leading the men about by her whim, unconscious of any impropriety or conspicuousness. Each of these signers of large purposes took his seat at a table over which was suspended the bell of liberty, *sub rosa* bird cage of many tribulations. From the artistic elevation of the bell were draped strings of fire-crackers down to the corners and sides of the table in whose center reposed, on a square blotter, the large inkstand of momentous importance capped with the quill pen of mightier comment.

That Robert Morris was there anybody could see by looking at his back; and Thomas Jefferson, one would have known at a glance, provided one got the right view of him. That little Bennie Franklin was on hand, was an easy guess by the trim of his coat; and John Hancock all knew by his telling presence. John Witherspoon, Samuel Chase, with several others from that mystic circle did honor to this eventful meal. The sober aspect of these worthies was a decided contrast to the brilliancy of their conversation as the wit and wisdom

flowed on in unison with the eternal spirit of their accomplishment, namely: the document of their devoted and unbounded effort which gave the eagle its right.

"I tell you, Bennie, we did a firin' business that July week of sunny temperature," commented John Hancock.

"You're right we did; and that clause about having a natural right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness I like. Couldn't have been made better; do you think, Janice?"

"Well, I could have amplified and improved it slightly, if I had been around; but you did nicely notwithstanding men need the feminine interpretation of happiness."

"I tell you, I'm feeling pretty good over the whole affair!" This from John Adams. "Our names will go down in history — in fact they will be immortal — for the use of that pen and ink," with a gesture toward the utensils of all absorbing interest.

"It took some bravery, Jack."

"Sure it did, Robert Morris, but we did it!"

"With my encouragement," precisely announced Miss Meredith.

"Oh, of course you're counted in! Always have to be," reckoned Samuel Chase.

"That first self-evident truth that 'all men are created equal,' " pursued Janice, "might be bet-

tered by adding to it the recognition of the superiority of women in the course of human events."

"I'll tell you the one mistake we made," contributed Charles Carroll of Carrollton; we ought to have sent Janice over to appease King George before we declared to him so outspokenly, and then we might have loosened his Majesty's brass bands."

"I have thought so from the beginning," purred Janice in her turn, ready to follow any cue that might be given to take off their staid forefathers even amidst the covert glances that encircled the table.

"The 'throwing off' part has been no joke. Do you know it, John Hart?"

"Do I? You know very well, Francis Hopkinson, it has made me pull off my coat more than once."

"And I had to help you," put in Janice.

As the guests were viewing the tables, Marion strolled by just in time to get these last remarks; and as she drew near Virginia in John Hancock's vestments, her hand was caught by said personage and the audible whisper came, "Janice won't mind, just for a moment, Marion. Do share my chair with me."

"Indeed Janice does mind, John Hancock; but she has to submit to great indignities now that you have all become so independent," and Janice sat back in her injured reserve-cloak which she wrapped quite closely about her.

"It's working beautifully," whispered Virginia.

"Your arm is rather closely about Miss Mansfield," suggested Samuel Adams in whom Marion recognized Jane Bashford's twinkle.

"It's a great success, girls, — Oh! I mean gentlemen and lady," bowed Marion; "I think your table the best of all."

"Fine! We'll give you and Janice the chance to crack the bell," condescended Benjamin Franklin.

"Don't you think our descendants will be proud of us, Miss Mansfield? Just consider for a moment the number of family trees that will be sprouted. Why, Massachusetts Bay will grow a tremendous forest, I know, to say nothing of the other colonies," Elbridge Gerry settled back with satisfaction.

"I see a fair sized cherry tree started over on the other side of the room now," laughed Marion.

"Yes, but there'll be no hatchet about these trees," nodded Mr. Gerry full seriously, as he contemplated the future possibilities of the ever increasing trees and their spreading branches of New England aristocracy.

"Unless," added Marion with a wicked little shake of the finger, "some Western independence furnishes said implement."

"I perceive," and Mr. Gerry rose to the stiffened posture the occasion demanded from this

one of its fathers of the blue-blood pedigree, "I perceive that you are going to prove to be an extraction from those western wilds that won't even recognize the rightly proud place baked beans and brown bread are to hold in the sinews of our natural history, my dear madam, born, and exclusively brought up as you are in the one place of the universe producing these two most important and noble articles of food."

"May I venture to say" and Marion bowed with mock deference to this family sprout, "that as I look into the future with prophetic vision, I see these New England descendants will have preserved an honest inheritance in their capacity for cherishing and putting to their credit even the soil that nourished their proud ancestors. Call you it baked beans and brown bread?" she asked archly.

"John Hancock, I rise to a point of order, — that this maid of coming generations from the far unknown West who hasn't even a slip of a tree, just mere prairie grass, should make such questionable, sly implications against the green forests of which I am a part, — and long may they wave! — that she should do this ought to be a reason for assertion of family rights." Elbridge Gerry waited.

"Just so! just so!" asserted Mr. Hancock meekly.

"But sir," protested Marion, "I thought you were the signers of the Declaration of Independ-

ence who asserted that all men are created equal, recognizing neither patrician blood nor distinctions of aristocracy."

"I see no other way," put in Janice, "than to give the liberty bell a whack just to start a little crack by which our signers and their children may have a mite of an excuse to squeeze in some exclusively distinctive features into their family circles. There must be one slight opening in that liberty bell, or those fellows and their children and children's children and *dittos* will find exceedingly oppressive the common ring of common liberty. Let them squeeze into the crack, the liberty break, I say, and grow their family trees."

A merry laugh went around the table, and one or two of the New England lassies who were now upholding their forefathers made a secret resolution to retire to the shade that book full of little family slits which showed their entire lineage, — that book that mother brought out on too many occasions to show a friend, or that father left lying carelessly open on the library table.

"The shop-keeper that sold the ink for you signers, — I wonder what his descendants will do with him; wonder how far out his branches will spread?" The merriment in Marion's face was at its highest.

No one was equal to the answer and Ben Franklin broke in with, "Oh, I am dead tired of documents and papers and baked beans and trees

and other terrestrial things. Let's pass out. I want to fly my kite."

The adjournment was called for, and out they streamed in the same dignified order with which they had come in, soon to break up into an informal company to be congratulated by many that they, the signers of the Declaration, had one of the best tables of the evening. They felt themselves that none had enjoyed the spirit of their part any more.

Marion turned away with Jane Bashford knowing that she was winning her place back again among her friends. "If I can only bring the two forces together in congenial atmosphere! They don't look so suspiciously at me now, but I've got to go one way or another, and they with me or from me; I can't stand on the bridge all the time; I can't play two fiddles at once." These were her thoughts as she strolled off with Jane.

CHAPTER X

FRIENDSHIPS

As the April weeks were passing on, Marion was wrestling with an unsatisfied something in her heart. How could she tell what it was! It was indescribable, and she could not comprehend this strange feeling. Eugene had been most kind and faithful; the aggressive opposition of her friends had abated; Miss Holman had given her constant encouragement in occasional letters; Virginia seemed to be growing continually, and steadily stood true, though she was unusually quiet of late. There was every reason for the girl to be happy, but she wasn't so, exactly. There was a queer, aching void that refused to be filled.

Jack Casey had been up from New York the night before and his jolly companionship intermingled with the fellowship of music had done her a world of good; but he was back in New York by this time, and she was alone again and uneasy in her thoughts. She wished she weren't.

"Loneliness! stupid! I'm going out to my

flower comforters; they'll understand, — yes, every little detail of it. Why have I stayed away so long?" and she hastened into her wraps with mingled sensations of disgust at her own moodiness and longing to be with her treasured flower-children of the out-of-doors.

Over the girl wandered to Sunset and then on beyond towards Sunrise to find the nestling, cuddling hepaticas, so furry and warm as they snuggled down among the dry leaves, turning their little faces toward the heavens whence they caught the reflection of the pastel colorings: the blues, the pinks, the purples, which sometimes deepened to the darker shades as did the sunrise horizon and the sunset skies.

It had been a typical April day with the showers and the sunshine, a day which in its sympathetic living was truly representative of the girl who stepped out into the personal touch of its beauty. Just now she was stooping to gather some of the flowerets looking up into her eyes. Into the last hours of this day of fitful changes the sun was caressingly sending his quiet peaceful warmth, enveloping everything in one glow of joy, even the saddened girl who bent over the companions of her choice. For the moment she was supremely glad. She knew not why, any more than she had known why she had been saddened. She lingered over the little ones, touching their upturned faces so lovingly before she plucked them. She was in the far away

with the tiny fairies — a world all her own — when she heard in low, sweet, English accents, “A flower among flowers!” and Elizabeth Field stood looking at the golden-haired girl as the sunbeams lighted the fluffy tresses.

Marion looked up with the surprised exclamation, “Oh!”

Elizabeth, covered with confusion, stammered, “Pardon me, Miss Mansfield, the words came without my realizing them,” and she flushed as she turned away saying, “It was an intrusion which I trust you will forgive.”

“Please don’t go! I want you, Elizabeth,” and Marion’s eyes followed the tall girl rapidly going in the opposite direction. She stopped abruptly and started back slowly to Marion as she heard these words.

Marion was having all sorts of queer mental tremblings, utterly surprised with herself as she was for calling her fellow rambler “Elizabeth.” Never had she so addressed her before. She had made a social call upon her freshman friend who had received her most graciously but had not returned the call, much to Marion’s regret. They had met now and then in the corridors or on the campus and had exchanged pleasant greetings, but somehow there was a hesitancy about Miss Field’s making any sort of advance, even though Marion might throw out all kinds of encouragement. “She was reserved and yet it was not a reserve that offended

but rather made people want to know her better," Marion had said. Now she was taken a-back at Elizabeth's own momentary freedom that she, too, had been brought unexpectedly to this sudden informality.

"I am so glad to see you here!" These words did not cover Marion's embarrassment as much as she had hoped they would, and she handed Elizabeth the flowers she had picked. They were fondly taken with a "Thank you!" that meant more than that phrase ordinarily did.

"What is it?" asked Elizabeth as she saw a new thought light up the face of her friend who stood quite near her now, looking over the hills toward the Highlands.

"I just wanted to ask," came the frank answer, "was it you who sent me those dainty verses about the spring flowers for a Valentine?"

Her reply was a jovial laugh with "Perhaps that would be telling too much," and she turned to Marion two eyes that were fairly wicked in their dancing.

"They are more deeply appreciated than you know," said Marion with feeling.

Elizabeth looked beyond to the magnificent coloring of the sunset. "The misty atmosphere of the Highlands, as it envelopes them, taking off the sharp edges and making all into one succession of graceful melting curves, shading off into the mellow rose and gray of the sky, and then farther over

there toward the north, all the shades of the purple — isn't it all wonderful, Marion?"

With a simple "Yes," she answered and waited.

"It makes me grow large. I feel equal to anything when I look upon such magnificence and strength dropping from nature's hand." The girl threw her shoulders back, straightened to her full height, which was five, eight, and as she lifted her head and took in a deep breath she, too, seemed to be one of the generous thoughts to which Nature had taken pains to give beautiful expression.

"You look as if you could conquer worlds, Elizabeth."

"I somehow feel that I can, and I guess it's a good thing, for I'll have to do so in view of all that's before me. Oh!" which was an exclamation of surprise and regret; and her eyes added, "What am I saying! I'm sorry!" So she quickly changed the subject and came down to reality by asking, "Aren't you cold, standing still so long?"

"No, not at all! But Elizabeth, as you look at the large things of Nature, don't forget that she is also the mother of the most delicate and dainty little creations. Just look at these tiny, baby hepaticas as they nestle in your hand," and Marion touched them lightly.

"Yes, I know!" Elizabeth looked at them a moment and then glanced at Marion.

"These little ones give encouragement to the

weaker who feel that they can't accomplish great things, who sometimes wonder if they are just nodding and laughing their way through life." Marion stopped abruptly. She was getting near the danger line of revelation; but then she didn't believe that any more of herself, anyway, she silently philosophized.

"But they aren't," said Elizabeth with keen penetration; and in her own anxiety to reassure Marion, she revealed more of herself again than she intended, a thing which bothered her as she continued, "They bring joy and sweetness just as these flower-children are bringing it to my heart now."

"May I give you some April verses," said Marion, "that fell to-day into my hands, — and heart, too, I might say? They are these:

" "It is not raining rain to me,
 But raining daffodils!
 In every dimpled drop I see
 Wild flowers on the hills.
 A cloud of grey engulfs the day,
 And overwhelms the town.
 It is not raining rain to me,
 It's raining roses down!

" "It is not raining rain to me,
 But fields of clover bloom,
 Where every buccaneering bee
 May find his board and room!

A health, then, to the happy!
A fig to him who frets!
It is not raining rain to me,
It's raining violets!

They surely belong to the hours of this day, Elizabeth.

"Yes, they do. Those verses are happy little treasures;" and her eyes were adding as she looked at Marion, "Just like you."

They started down the hill and across the field with the secret conviction that they had had a queer time of it. Each had given out more than she usually did, more than she intended to give, more than she really wanted to give. Elizabeth hated to be thought sentimental, and Marion shrank from sharing with another, especially with one she knew so little, her inmost longing. After all, however, there was a quiet contentment in both hearts. They had both been lonely and now they were winding their way back to the college, having found new courage, new inspiration. That the conversation on their home walk was fragmentary was due to the fact that each was carrying on her own separate train of thought.

"Marion Mansfield, my! I could love her a lot. Wish she were my sister, but it couldn't be. She's so dainty and beautiful and pure and true and noble; I'm so big and awkward and entirely in the rough."

The other girl's heart discussion — "Oh, she is splendid! Just when I thought I didn't want anybody she was there; and now she has done me good. She is so large, and strong, and likable; yet what delicate sentiment! I never would have thought it of one with such a commanding presence! I somewhat expected great, vigorous considerations from her; and I guess she is capable of them, also. I'm glad she likes me! Wonder if she knows Miss Holman? How fine they would be together! Of course she does. — Do you know Miss Holman?" Marion asked aloud.

"I heard her speak, and barely know her, though I have no acquaintance with her. She made a very deep impression upon me. To have such a woman come into close touch with college girls means much. You are a very dear friend of hers, are you not?"

"Yes, I love her dearly, and she is a great help to me; but what puzzles me is that you did not become better acquainted with her. She is the sort of woman, strong and magnetic, that I imagine would appeal to you."

"Oh, you do!" and Elizabeth burst into a hearty laugh, a genuine mask to her feelings, after which she sobered down and added, "Well, she did appeal to me, but there were so many that needed her that when she was alone I knew she must be tired and that my coming would have seemed an

intrusion, since I had nothing very definite to say to her."

"No one ever meant so much to me as she has; I get rather lonely for her," confessed Marion as she looked away. "So few people understand. I must have been lonely this afternoon, but you came and I was glad."

"I wish I might be your friend. I wish I knew how to take the 'lonely' away; but perhaps you don't want me. I am so clumsy about everything I do or say," and she laughed a laugh that wasn't a laugh.

"You took the loneliness away this afternoon;" smiled Marion reassuringly.

"So did you;" and then followed that same embarrassed, "Oh!" that Marion recognized as Elizabeth's expression of regret that she had gone too far.

"I want you for a friend, Elizabeth, and I am glad I have you."

"So am I," was the only reply.

They walked in silence the rest of the way, but as they separated at the Main Building, Elizabeth took Marion's hand and said, "Good bye, Miss Mansfield; I don't know why I have told you so much of myself this afternoon; it isn't natural, but I couldn't help it."

"I'm glad you couldn't. I know you now, and I want to know you better; but it doesn't seem to me that you told much;" and she might have added,

"I thought I was doing all the telling," but she didn't care to point to that; consequently she said nothing further.

"Oh! but I told a lot," and Elizabeth gave an odd, embarrassed toss of her head as she laughed again.

"Elizabeth, you miscalled me a moment ago. Remember I'm Marion."

"I'll love to call you Marion."

A good bye and they had separated.

That Elizabeth wore the little hepaticas to chapel that night brought Marion a sweet message.

While the next weeks revealed to Marion that she was coming closer to a new friend, she seemed to be drifting away from an old friend. Why it was she could not fathom; for Virginia in some respects was much nearer than ever before. Marion had never known Virginia's inner, spiritual life as she knew it now; and yet there was an intangibility that perplexed her, making her wish for something that she herself did not have for Virginia. She knew not why or what it was; all she knew was that at times she felt somewhat uncomfortable with her old friend, and she believed that Virginia had the same feeling when she was with her. She had said over and over, "I am a coward. Why don't I ask her right out?" But that did not help matters any.

One evening she had slipped over to Virginia's room with the determination in her heart to get

at the bottom of all this uncertainty, cost what it might. She found Virginia surrounded by a bevy of girls profuse in their congratulations upon her sure prospects of getting a Phi Beta Kappa key.

"You see Professor White let it slip, before he thought, the other day when I was up in the 'lab,' and told me that Virginia was to be one of the *key* girls. How he colored up, when he realized what he had said, and added 'You'd better not let it go too far, but Virginia and her intimates ought to know.' " Jean Brown contributed this information to Marion with a high degree of satisfaction, and very easily assumed in the circle of girls the place of authority in her present office of referee.

"Splendid!" ejaculated Marion as she caught Virginia's face between her hands to kiss it. "I knew it would come. Been predicting it all this year."

"And she," pointed out Jane Bashford, "doesn't 'enthuse' one bit. It's as if some one tossed her a bunch of violets and said, 'Have some!' while she indifferently picked them up. My! I'd give my head for a Phi Beta key."

"There, that will do, Jane!" chimed in some one. "You know very well you are one of those to lead the list. It's for us poor mortals to wait, who haven't ever had any chance, having made such light use of our heads as to deprive us of so much glory."

Virginia had colored at Jane's remark and given a sickly little smile, but said nothing.

Why was Marion so very stupid? Could she never read the signs of the times? She thought only, "She is so woefully quiet!"

Virginia was telling herself quite another story: "O you old, tell-tale face! What is a bunch of violets—yes, any bunch? Why am I silly enough to let them remind me always of one thing? And what's the difference, anyway? Marion had guessed it all lo! these many weeks; but I suppose she is too happy in her own heart to give it a second thought. She knows he loves her. Oh, where's my pride! I have fairly thrown my misery into her face, this afternoon. She looks soberly at me. Oh, dear! I can't bear to have her say it to me."

"I tell you girls," laughed Virginia, "you are like the old woman with her setting hen—looking too far into the future. I'll have my gleeful gymnastics when the time actually comes, which it never will, probably. To tell the honest truth, you embarrass me with all this. Think how I'll feel when the time of declaration comes and I am out of it." Again she laughed.

Miriam Washburn took up this sentence with, "Which you never will be, Virginia! You know you are the pride of our class and we expect you to make our record."

"What a responsibility," exclaimed Virginia

in mock seriousness. "If you only knew — " she shook her head, while mentally she concluded, "what a mill-stone my feelings are about my neck! Can't study or anything."

That anyone should ever guess that Virginia was in love was the most improbable consideration; for she was looked upon as a girl of keen mind, gracious manners, covered feelings, — a general favorite among her friends who were from a select circle. That anyone had ever gone more deeply into her life than Marion Mansfield no one imagined. Virginia was the one who was ready for a debatable question at any time, and much preferred an ethical or philanthropic discussion to personal interchange of confidences. She was not witty, but quick to see sequences and draw conclusions; she was also a girl with a good memory. In love? How incongruous! It could not be! And yet, why not? She was attractive. That her heart had become dictator over her life instead of her head had for many months caused her a rebellion. She had finally given in and said it was no use.

"The facts in the case are," she said to herself as she turned out her light that night and was left in darkness to think, "I'm all unsettled every way. Marion has made me think about spiritual things which I didn't care to think about. And oh, dear!" the words came with a tinge of sarcasm, "she is making me think about heart things which I don't care to think about." She stopped

abruptly. The thought changed. "I don't see why I have been so slouchy in my thoughts about religious matters. I don't believe I am, in anything else. May be, I have wanted to be literary, and shunned the simple faith. May be my pride has been hurt because in the Bible philosophy I would have to draw so many conclusions on premises built on trust, while I wanted to see everything. The easiest way to quiet that sort of thing was not to bother. I was mentally superior, I suppose. Whew! my mental powers have had a severe shaking lately by the spiritual and the emotional; I have been blind a long, long time to the truth that it is trust, trust, everywhere you go, and with any philosophy you take up. Some of them try to put up a sham of so-called reason, flatter you, and tell you it isn't anything so shabby as faith — Blind! yes, and now, poor me!" she laughed aloud. "It's ridiculous! I'm finding out that love is blind. Blind! I should say it is! What right have I — what sense is there in falling dead in love with Jack Casey? H-m! I don't sing. Marion is much more his companion. I'm not specially jolly. He has to have fun. Marion is always bubbling over. Who ever thought I'd be a *pining* maiden, and who cares? She always seems so light-hearted and happy when he comes. The last few months she has been more thoughtful than usual — sober — but he never fails to cheer her, and she is my — no! his —" she caught

her breath — “happy Mary again.” She broke into sobs, to fall fast asleep at last.

A few weeks later, early in the month of May, Virginia was out among the pines, resting in their sweet, soothing fragrance and trying to shake loose from some of the distress of the past winter when she saw approaching her Marion with Jack Casey. Both were laughing like children, as much as to say “We have found you out!” while she murmured to herself, “Oh, it’s coming! They are going to break the news! Do help me, my God!”

“Where have you been?” called Marion. “We’ve looked high and low for you.”

“Just here,” answered Virginia, a little bit the paler.

“Jack came about a half hour ago. Luckily I happened to be in my room. We have been hunting you ever since.”

Meantime Virginia had shaken hands, wondering if Marion knew of his intended visit. “But of course she did,” was her conclusion.

Jack Casey, however, quite took her aback by announcing, “These surprises don’t work. I have only a half hour more to stay. But you see I didn’t know I was coming till about forty minutes before I started. Say! this is great up here! Sunset, did you call it, Marion?”

She nodded.

“It reminds me,” a wicked twinkle came into his eyes as he turned to Marion, “of the beauties

of Mohonk on a small scale. Honest! that word has never passed my lips from that day to this," and he broke out into the jolliest of laughs.

"I don't see the resemblance unless it's the distant view of the Highlands and the Catskills," said Marion, a trifle bothered by these reminiscences, but still equal to a laugh.

"A fond memory to him," Virginia mused. "If they will only keep on talking, so I won't have to!"

Jack Casey prated on, "Just a passing thought of a by-gone incident that brought me two charming friends," and he made his bow.

Although Jack had joked in his usual good-humored and wholesome way, not seeming to notice one girl more than the other, Virginia was sensitive to any of the slightest indications even though they might have been only imaginary. As he departed, it ran through her head, "The comfortable assurance with which he joked about Mohonk! Never saw that before!"

Marion, too, was pondering, as she watched Jack's tall manly stride as it carried him into the distance. "She is troubled about something. I almost thought for a moment, as we came up, that Jack was making her uneasy. But pshaw! it can't be that. Some sort of shadow went across her face, though."

"Come! let's take a walk," suggested Marion, as she slipped her arm through Virginia's.

"I'm pretty tired," hesitated Virginia, in fear lest she should reveal herself, and longing to be alone where she could throw off the hated mask.

"Why, my Virgie! You haven't looked well lately. What is it, my dear! I've wanted to ask you, but somewhat feared," and Marion colored as she realized how foolishly she had spoken.

Virginia glanced at Marion but said nothing as she led her apart to an unfrequented part of the campus. She threw herself down and almost petulantly exclaimed, "I'm just tired to death, Marion."

Marion was so nonplused at this tone which she had never before heard in Virginia's voice that for a moment she didn't say a word or do a thing, but stood there feeling herself decidedly in the way.

"I believe you ought to see the doctor and get a tonic," mildly suggested her companion.

"No, it isn't a tonic that I need," groaned Virginia.

"Perhaps, you would rather be alone."

"Thank you, Marion! I believe I do need to be by myself to get readjusted."

Marion turned away with a heavy ache in her heart. She could scarcely swallow, and her breath came quick and short. To the one girl she loved to help above all others in college, she had found she was helpless at a time of evident need and suffering. It seemed cruel to abandon her, yet she

was not wanted, and somehow it hurt! "I don't have to abandon her though. I'll go home and pray and pray for her. The Christ understands, if I don't. Oh, if she would trust me, though, and tell me!"

For a time Virginia forgot how she might have left a hurt in Marion's heart by so shutting her out of her life. Her only salvation seemed to be to get away from everybody.

"The mortification of it! to let her see me suffer in it! What provokes me is that I am so weak. A struggle is on; when is the end going to come? I am tired, tired out. What is a Phi Beta Kappa key? Who wants it? What has become of my early ambitions? I was rather surprised to-day to hear him express himself so frankly and strongly on the beauty of a Christian. How Marion's face lit up then! A queer expression followed as if she were hungry for something."

Little did Virginia realize that Marion's thought had turned to Eugene in a prayer that he might so know God.

"O my! What shall I do to get straight? Here come those girls making a bee line for me — Frances and 'Little' Warren — and oh! for some rig-a-ma-role to keep the lumps out of my throat and mind," and she rattled on with a perfectly sober face, as she pushed her hair back and brushed the tears away:—

“ ‘I’d rather have eyes than a nose;
I’d rather have fingers than toes;
And as for my hair,
I don’t very much care;
I’ll be heartily glad when it goes.’ ”

She had managed to say this over three times before they reached her so that she was quite composed, able to talk to order and quite at their will with never a suspicion rising in their minds.

Silently she commented, “A victory won. I’m getting on famously. ‘I’d rather have eyes than a nose!’ Droll isn’t it?” she laughed to herself quite unnoticed, as she wandered toward the lake with them.

“You looked as if you were indulging in empty meditation,” said “Little” Warren.

“I was! Glad you came along to pull me out,” she nodded in approval.

Later, as Virginia remembered how curt had been her adieus to Marion she tried to smooth her attitude down to gentleness; but there was an unrest about it all, try though she did to avoid uneasiness. The out-door days came on with temptations to long strolls, and yet she and Marion were seeing less and less of each other while Elizabeth and Marion were finding deeper companionship in the long walks together.

CHAPTER XI

A MAY MORNING BREAKFAST

The new Association year opening in March found Marion Mansfield chairman of the social committee with a motley array of committeemen, some of them new though earnest, some there because nobody knew what else to do with them, others solely because they were clever at getting up novel entertainments.

As Marion called them together one afternoon, she looked the line through curiously turning over in her mind the material she had to work with and weighing probabilities. She, however, did not know most of them well, and so did not realize difficulties.

Christ came to her with His assurance and she entered enthusiastically into the plans she had been cherishing for her committee. She felt a bit young and inexperienced, but she had one standby and that was Elizabeth Field.

"I can always rely upon her common sense and good judgment, anyway," she had congratu-

lated herself. "When I get that May morning breakfast off my hands I'll be thankful, and then for solid, every day work."

The girls came into the committee room to find Marion sitting there quietly waiting, her face fairly radiant. They did not know that she had been there the last fifteen minutes praying for her own preparation.

There were just five girls out of the twelve that she could say she knew. How happy she was in three of them nobody realized: Elizabeth, "Little" Warren, and Clara Louise. Yes, she had at last won Clara Louise! Her own little room-mate had very quietly and with few words gone into the Association and was now acting on her committee with "Little" Warren, another one of Marion's victories.

It had taken only an encouraging word or two to have "Little" Warren respond: "Been thinking about it all winter. Come on over to the rooms with me and I'll join, Marion."

The other two with whom she felt at ease were from the last year's committee.

There had been just one meeting previous to this and that had been a joint meeting with the old committee who took the lead. This was the new committee's first meeting alone. Marion felt that she ought to open with prayer, a thing not the easiest in the world to do there before her own companions, — yes, her own room-mate — since she

had never prayed in the hearing of any one except the sympathetic Miss Holman. Her eyes caught the name of Amy Morrison on the list, and she thought, "I'll ask her to give the opening prayer, then at the close I'll get up more courage. Don't know her in a spiritual way — just out on the basket-ball field is all — but then she is older, will soon be a senior, and ought to do it easily."

The lively chatting went on till finally Marion tapped on the table and the words sweetly came, "I believe we ought to begin, girls." She looked directly at Amy, and added unassumingly, "Will you lead us in prayer, Amy?"

A moment's pause followed and then the cutting words, "Do your own praying, Marion."

A nervous shudder seemed to go around the room, and yet there appeared to be a sympathetic contingency with Amy; at least three or four girls quite enjoyed the situation.

Marion grew pale, dropped her head upon her hands and prayed simply in low, distinct tones: "Our beloved Father, we are entering upon a new service of Thine with gratitude in our hearts that the opportunity is ours to do for Thee when Thou hast done so much for us. We are Thy little children. We know so little, but Thou art our Father and wilt teach us. First prepare us who are in this committee to hear Thy voice that Thou mayst work in us to win girls to Thee. We are timid; we feel very weak at times, but we ask Thee to

help us to know the truth of that verse, 'When He hath put forth His own He goeth before.' Thy beloved Son is ever leading us, and we thank Thee. Thou hast put us forth and we pray Thee to help us follow Thy lead in Christ Jesus. Be with us in this hour, be with us in a personal message, be with us in planning for our May morning breakfast, we ask Thee for Jesus' sake, Amen."

More than one eye was hazy for a moment at the close of this prayer, while Amy was finding that her feelings and jealous ambitions were decidedly disconcerted. It had been a cross to her that she couldn't have this chairmanship, that she was asked to serve under a junior. She had seen Marion heretofore in a jolly, happy-go-lucky, athletic atmosphere, and had considered that this praying business would be the undoing of her. But then it was good enough for her and for the work, too; for they had no business putting such a girl in as chairman. It had all been a revelation — this shift of affairs. The committee meeting seemed to be turned into a prayer meeting instead of proceeding as a business meeting.

After reading from the third chapter of John, the sixteenth verse, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life," Marion took up the part, "God so loved the world that He gave." Her prayer had strengthened her and she said in part: "Do you

know, girls, I wish we as a social committee might take up the problem of college democracy. The college ought to be the nucleus, the inspiration of the democratic spirit in our communities. If college life, where a student is supposed to stand on his true worth, isn't democratic, I don't know what community can hope to be so. If the college men and women aren't going to be fair-minded, I don't know who can be; for certainly, with their training, they have the advantage of seeing things as they are, not with prejudice, not with narrowness, but with the broad outlook. God didn't love just a few people, but He loved the world. He didn't send His Son just to an exclusive little nation, over in one corner of the earth, but He sent Him to the world, as the universal friend, the One Person alone who can teach us this universality of sympathies, of understanding. But if He can't find followers within the college walls, followers who can enter into His great democratic heart-purposes, where can He find them? And, girls, what better agency can He give us than our social committee which stands for fellowship? I have felt lately that we have been getting awfully 'cliquey.' I know I can't say much; I have been an offender, but I just want to tell you, girls, that I am going to put forth every effort not to be so hereafter. I do know that our college is one of the most democratic in the whole country, but it seems to me we have come to a place where we need some careful

watching and guiding. May we not make this one of our chief aims in our work this year, and make it so in the name of Him who said 'That ye may love one another even as I have loved you'?

"I believe you will agree with me that we have right before us one of our best chances to help bring this about; I mean the May morning breakfast. I wish that in making out our sub-committees we might draw, just as largely as possible, upon girls with luke-warm interests and upon as many different social circles as we can, mixing them up together, making this an opportunity to get people acquainted. Shortly, I'll read the names of those I have down as chairmen of the various sub-committees, and will you please make appointments with me within the next two days to talk over your committees, each bringing in a list of six girls and alternates, and then we'll hope to make the right choice. And girls, will you each be praying for the spiritual life of the girls under you?

"You probably remember that the date is the fourteenth. We are to have the 'gym' as usual, and I am told by the last-year chairman that we may expect to serve eight hundred. We ought to make one hundred fifty dollars our treasurer tells us, if our budget is to furnish sufficient funds for the Silver Bay Conference delegates."

After some informal discussions and the necessary detailed arrangements, the committee adjourned.

Elizabeth's face had been a study to Marion during the whole hour. When Amy made the unkind response, a set, determined, almost hard expression overshadowed Miss Field's features, and she blushed to the roots of her hair. She sat quite immovable while Marion spoke, though her expression softened somewhat. It almost made Marion fear for what would follow and so she touched Elizabeth as she passed by, saying in a low voice, "Just a moment; I want to see you."

"I can't talk to you Marion, just now. I must get out or something will break loose; I'm stifled."

"Promise me that you'll say nothing to Amy Morrison."

Determination came into Elizabeth's expression again. "No, not now; I'm going for a walk."

"Not till I see you again," urged Marion.

Elizabeth hesitated. "Quick, Elizabeth! The other girls will notice us. You must."

"I promise, but it's hard," and a tender look came into Elizabeth's eyes as she scanned Marion's face.

"Thank you." Again Marion was mingling with the girls and talking as if nothing had happened.

When Marion reached her room Clara Louise took her by the shoulders, kissed her vehemently, and said, "I'm as proud as I can be of you! But

wasn't Amy Morrison horrid? I felt like shaking her! You were just beautiful about it, Marion. All the girls felt so, too. They spoke to me of it. Guess Amy didn't feel very good, the way she stole off."

"I'm so sorry it happened, Clara Louise. I never dreamt of such a thing from Amy. I don't understand it. She has always seemed my friend." Marion's eyes filled with tears, and as Clara Louise slipped her hand into her room-mate's, Marion turned with, "You are my little comfort!"

Her room-mate's eyes looked suspiciously moist as she said, "I was stubborn and a long time coming around, Marion, while you suffered."

"But you came, dear, and I am happy," she smiled.

"You got several of the girls in, didn't you, Marion?"

"Six. Our social committee got forty-five in the last month. Wasn't that fine?"

Her room-mate nodded, "And now you are chairman. Do you know I am awfully interested in that breakfast? Think of my being chairman of anything, even a decorating committee. But we are going to make the hall mighty pretty; I've made up my mind to that."

So they chatted on, while they dressed for dinner.

After dinner as Marion was out with several girls walking and waiting for the chapel bell a

slight breeze tossed her handkerchief out of her hand and around the corner. As she went after it she ran into Elizabeth Field who asked, "Will you take 'ex' with me to-morrow, — a walk up the country road past the inn?"

"Yes, surely!" Marion looked into a face that was still concealing a strong emotion. When she joined the other girls, however, Elizabeth was her own sweet jolly self, and Marion was relieved.

The next day found the two girls starting out on their tramp each saying little and thinking much.

At last Elizabeth broke out with, "I tell you, Marion, it was the hardest thing I ever did to keep still when that Miss Morrison spoke so insultingly to you. If I could only have taken it! My shoulders are broad, and I don't care."

"Whew! You look like a thunder cloud, as you rise in your might! I fear you may knock down the first person you chance to meet!" A troubled laugh came from Marion as she looked at Elizabeth straightening up to her full height. It seemed as if her indignation had added an inch to her stature. "But you know," Marion continued, "you are not so awfully much larger than I; only an inch and a half."

"Well, I feel larger, any how; I'm so big, and strong, and awkward. You are so delicately built, so gracious in your ways, I always feel I need to protect you. You are the tall, beautiful and pure

lily of the Easter tide, and I am some great, old, sinewy, road-side weed that chances to grow by the field where you abide."

"If a roadside dweller, never a weed, but one of those great, beautiful ferns — brakes — a sentinel to the field where the lily is," laughed the girl.

"If I'm the sentinel, I tell you I am going to guard you. Amy Morrison is never going to say such things to you again."

The troubled look came back into Marion's face. "Dear heart, there is one thing I long for in your life which you haven't yet. I mean that sweet yielding which Christ showed, an expression of loving His enemies. With your friends you are ready to fight anybody who trespasses; with yourself it is a cold disdain, and that isn't as Christ would wish."

"I suppose I am a barbarian, but I simply can't stand it to see you hurt."

Marion's thought went back over the past months. "I wonder what she would have done, if she had been with me then?"

"Elizabeth, you must stand it; we must both stand it for His sake. Amy was hurt much more than I."

"Yes, they despised her for it, I know."

"I wish, dear, you didn't have such strong dislikes."

"I have strong likes and strong dislikes, Mar-

ion, and I don't believe you can ever make me over."

"I don't hope to, but Christ can; and I'm praying that He will."

Elizabeth looked deep down into her friend's eyes for a moment as her own filled with tears. It was the first time Marion had ever seen tears there. Pride usually "chucked" Elizabeth's feelings into her pocket; she seldom lacked that mask. It was pride that held up her head in the face of any difficulty. Pride never turned to sternness, however, unless too closely crowded to the wall. She had yet to learn from Marion the power of Christ's humility.

"Promise me, Elizabeth, you will not say anything to Amy."

Elizabeth pressed Marion's hand and then came the slow, determined, "I will."

They went back to the college in the course of an hour; and when Elizabeth left Marion she said quickly, "You have many things to teach me! I am not an apt pupil, but like me just the same, won't you?"

"I'll love you always."

Elizabeth slowly walked over to Acton Hall with a queer, thwarted feeling in her heart; she was accustomed to accomplish anything she undertook. "My! but I love her. Guess she can do just about what she wants to with me while she is around; but I never, never can have her sweet spirit. Wish

I could," she thought, and a long breath indicated her weariness of heart.

The morning for the breakfast was a perfect one. The girls were out at five-thirty flying around making their busy time a merry one. They were to serve from seven to nine-thirty, and although they had the assistance of the maids from the Main dining-room, they found plenty to do. The gymnasium was a veritable May bower. The twenty tables laid with fresh, white linen were made wonderfully attractive by the May messages which the girls had gathered from the hill-sides and the college gardens. Each table had suspended above its center three yellow tissue-paper cornucopias held together so as to seem to be a triple May basket in which the violets were fairly reveling and streaming over the edges of the dainty three-pointed baskets for very joy. Through the middle part of the tables and straying off to the individual places were violets and their leaves. Along the four sides of the gymnasium, as mural pieces, were great branches of apple blossoms that filled the room with the May fragrance. They were caught up at intervals into large bunches of delight. The fireplace at the end of the room was banked by one mass of apple blossoms. The finishing touch of glory was given by the sun as he came in through the upper windows, flooding the room with his mellow light, kissing the yellow May baskets into fairy sunbeams.

At precisely seven o'clock the chapel chimes

began to play, and soon the orchestra made lively workers. Students had been waiting for the last fifteen minutes outside, and as they poured into the room to catch the exquisite beauty of flowers and sun, their eyes wandered to the more charming attraction of the happy-faced girls all dressed in summer white, the dearest flowers of all, waiting to serve and to direct.

It was a simple breakfast, but so carefully prepared and daintily served that it was pronounced an overwhelming success. Marion was congratulated at every turn. The greatest success of all, however, was that same fellowship-spirit that Marion had prayed might come out of it. Girls outside the Association offered their services, and girls who had never been at all active in the Association came and asked to help. Two girls who were not Christians and who were going home before the close of school, so that they could not give personal aid, left money to buy materials, they so wanted a share in the enterprise. One of the girls at the following cabinet meeting expressed the sentiment of a good many when she said, "Girls, I was just ashamed of myself when I saw Alice Woodruff out there in the kitchen with her sleeves rolled up, washing dishes all that afternoon. I thought how I had misjudged her, and I intend after this to look for the good in people, instead of the bad."

That the one hundred fifty dollars were raised was good, but one couldn't begin to tell the many

better things that resulted in the hearts of the girls. "Little" Warren was heard to say to Elizabeth, "Do you know, I just believe it has all come out this way because there was so much prayer behind that breakfast. I tell you, I'm thinking a lot lately about practical Christianity. Miss Holman started me on it."

One of the personal outcomes of this May morning *fête* was an interview that same afternoon which Amy Morrison requested from Marion. Marion dreaded it, for especially at times Amy was a haughty sort of person. Marion expected no less than that Amy would ask to be released from her committee duties though she had worked faithfully, even if quietly, during the whole of this busy time.

At five o'clock they met on the steps of Wavertree House and wandered out into the gardens with scarcely a word passing between them, as they turned toward the pine walk. It was not until they were within the quiet precincts of this secluded path that Amy found any words for expression.

"Marion, I have been doing some thinking since that committee meeting." She stopped. Marion could see that it was very difficult for her to continue, but she did not interrupt. "I made a mistake for which I am sorry, and this morning I decided to tell you of it. Do you accept my apology?"

Marion quickly held out her hand and the other girl grasped it firmly while she said frankly and unobtrusively, "You know I do, Amy. I could not believe you meant it any of the time. I am so glad you told me, and now we can understand each other. The breakfast was a success and you had no small part in making it so. Your music put everybody in good spirits. The orchestra played splendidly, and the chimes were such a delightful surprise to us all; I did appreciate it." Marion chatted on, glad to change the subject, for confession and humility were anything but becoming to such a make-up as Amy Morrison's, and Marion felt embarrassed at being a witness.

"'Twas nothing! I did little. Our orchestra required almost no drilling. This social work has shown you to me in a new light and this morning's enterprise revealed to me such harmony as I had never imagined. I determined then and there to say to you what I have," she continued, doggedly returning to the unpleasant subject to stay by it till she had said all. "There is one request I have to make of you, and I have confidence in your generosity to believe that you will grant it. It will be difficult to ask you for it, and it will be more difficult to fulfil it, if you do grant it; but I can't have any rest under present conditions." She stopped and faced Marion. "Will you, at your next committee meeting, ask me to pray?" Her face was white and Marion could see the struggle.

"Oh, so gladly, Amy!"

"I see you understand. I feel I owe an apology not only to you but also to the committee, and this is the only way I can make it."

Marion hesitated and then said, "You don't need to persecute yourself so; just work cheerfully on and they will understand."

"Oh, yes, it will cut!" was the answer coldly given, "but I guess I can be as thorough-going in the fixing up as I was in the undoing. I'm sorry I caused you to suffer. It has been a severe experience to me, but it has taught me a lesson because of the way you have responded to my sarcasm. I have said cutting things before, but nobody ever treated me as you have done. I hope to prove myself your true friend in the future." She turned to go back and Marion with her. They said little on their return, but separated much easier both in heart and mind than they had on meeting.

"Hello, there, Mumsie! What you been doing with that Amy Morrison? I should think you would detest her." This from "Little" Warren whom Marion met coming over from Helen Gould Hall. "It was all I could do to be decent to her this morning, and I did get some satisfaction in sort of snapping her off, once or twice. I know I was cross; and of course it didn't help any, but you don't have to endure everything just because you're chairman." "Little" Warren looked up questioningly at Marion.

"But just because we are Christians, 'Little' Warren." "Little" Warren looked puzzled. "Though I want to tell you that Amy Morrison is sorry, so sorry, and I believe you will realize her sincerity some day. But I'm sorry, Warney, if you were cross to her; as you say, that never helps."

"Now I couldn't help it; she was mean to you. No use talking! When such feelings are riled up in me they have to come out, sooner or later; so there!" She looked defiant under Marion's admonition.

"'Little' Warren, there is one thing I wish for you. I wish you'd give your quick temper over to Christ, with those 'bitey' little words that are so likely to go with it. He'd care for it."

"H—m! I suppose so. That would mean giving up the whole thing," mused "Little" Warren soberly.

admonition { "Yes, that's just what I meant! — the Christ for your Master; as somebody has said, 'Let the mind of the Master be the master of your mind,' for you are what you will to be, as Mr. Mott told us."

"That's asking a good deal. What do you want that of me for, anyhow?" A quizzical look came into her eyes as she faced Marion.

Marion quickly and earnestly responded, "For Christ's sake, your sake, and the sake of the girls. You know very well you have a large circle of

influence. Christ, only when He has full and uninterrupted sway, can make of you what you want to be."

"Well, now, I don't know, Marion. I suppose it wasn't just the thing to say what I did to Amy. 'Twas none of my party, anyway. It probably didn't do her any good, though it gave me a whole lot of satisfaction." Marion could not refrain from laughing at this; it was so true. " 'Master,' you said! Usually my own boss. I tell you Marion, I might do it, if I wasn't afraid He'd sometimes take advantage of me."

Marion was shocked for a moment, and then the humor of it shook her with laughter. "Positively, Warney, the most refreshing piece of frankness I ever struck! I guess that's what's the matter with a good many people, only they aren't honest enough to say it. They are afraid the Lord will take advantage of them, if they give Him all. I wish, in the next few weeks, you would study the Christ as a master of life, as you see Him in the four gospels, and then decide whether you think He is the kind to be entrusted with your little life, or my little life, and tell me the results."

"That I'll do, Mumsy! I declare you know how to get around a fellow. Say, I think you a 'dandy' chairman! Just thought I'd tell you about it. We never had such a fine May morning breakfast."

“It was good; but you committee girls did far more than I did.”

“Did no such thing! But good bye. I’ve got to get ready for dinner. Have to get a hustle on.”

“Little” Warren dodged around the corner and over to Acton Hall.

CHAPTER XII

A JUNE START

“I tell you, Elizabeth, you simply must go home with me. Here it is June third, and in ten days we’ll be starting for the West. Come, do decide; say ‘Yes’ to-day!” said Marion, as the laugh and the earnest pleading played back and forth in the expression of her eyes.

“Well, I don’t know,” seriously responded Elizabeth. Then she looked up as an embarrassed smile covered her face and the color deepened. “Marion, I am not used to accepting gifts in this way. Never in my life have I done it. I really ought to be earning some money to help me through next winter. I don’t see how I can let summer go idly by. Of course I have no family to keep me here in the East; nothing left of my home in Springfield but a house, and that no longer belongs to me,” she mused. “But,” she resumed, “Marion, it’s not easy to accept all this from your father. I don’t understand why he should be so kind; I am not accustomed to such kindness. What

I've got, I've had to get by hard knocks. You are too good to me; too good to me, Marion," and her eyes filled with tears. "How can I let you! I don't understand you."

A queer expression came across Marion's face. Elizabeth was startled.

"Oh, Marion! I don't mean that; don't you know I don't? It's not pride that made me say I didn't see how I could accept so much from your father, but dear!" she broke out in her clear, English accent, "it just seemed too much; I don't deserve it; I don't;" she said resolutely, "and I never could repay such kindness."

"Yes, Elizabeth, you would repay ten-fold everything we could do for you by just being in our house this summer. It would do us all good to have your strong, wholesome personality among us; mother and father would enjoy you so much. They are anxious to have you with us, Elizabeth. I am sure you understand when I tell you that anything father could do for you would be no money sacrificed. God has been good to us and entrusted us with plenty to share with others of His children. We want you to share our home with us, this summer. And now you'll not hesitate at all to take your part of what God has given us simply as a trust for you. Will you?" She smiled reassuringly as she held out a fifty dollar draft to Elizabeth. "What shall I ever do with it, unless you take it. Father sent it for your ticket."

Elizabeth buried her head in her hands, and two or three heavy sighs forced an escape from her heart. At last the words came quietly, while her face was still covered, "Marion I never knew a father's love, a father's care. He lives, but he is not mine."

Marion knelt beside her as this new revelation came, and throwing her arms about her, said, "Oh, my precious dear heart, my father is your father." Deep feeling was in her voice, and the tears were streaming down her face.

Elizabeth slowly lifted her head, looked into Marion's eyes, and taking the tearful face between her hands almost whispered, "You never knew that did you, Marion. I couldn't tell you until I saw you thought that he, as well as my mother, was dead. I somehow couldn't do otherwise. Why I have told you this afternoon, I know not. It must have been because your father, who has never seen me — a perfect stranger to me — is waiting to do more for me than he who" — Her voice broke, her head buried itself on Marion's shoulder, while she sobbed, "Oh, the humiliation of it!"

Deep sympathy and calm tenderness soon brought Elizabeth back to her usual self-control. Then Marion picked up the crumpled draft and handed it to her friend saying, "It's yours, my loved one; take it; come home with me; I need you this summer."

Elizabeth looked questioningly into the tell-tale

eyes that she had never seen really saddened before, the eyes she had often thought of as laughing eyes. They were now filled with unutterable pain.

"Yes, Elizabeth, I, too, suffer. I see that you, like all the rest, have looked upon me as a ceaseless fun-making machine." A choke interrupted Marion, but she continued as Elizabeth pressed her hands, "No, I can't tell it to you now; but believe me that I shall need you, and come."

"Marion, I will." She took the draft in her hand. "Do you suppose that I could get a position in Minneapolis?"

"You are too tired, Elizabeth. You have been working too steadily this year to do without the summer's rest."

"You would spoil me. I must be allowed to pay some of my way, Marion. Do not misunderstand me. Truly it is not pride that prompts me to do this, but the desire to keep firm in my life those principles of honor, justice, duty, sacrifice, and above all fellowship with those about me, all of which make the years worth living. It would be impossible for me to give back to you as you give to me; but I pray that when I am through with these college years I may be equipped to pass on kindness to another who needs it."

"Oh, I am so happy you are going!" was all that Marion could say.

"But the position," urged Elizabeth.

"Yes, yes, perhaps in father's office, if you

insist; but we'll say no more of it, dear; after you show me the sights in Boston, your old tramping ground, we'll strike for the West. You ought to have seen mother's letter in answer to my proposition that we go back home by way of historic Boston. They all made fun of me, and she said it gave brother, who is in Minneapolis you know, a fine inspiration to take his California trip *via* Chicago, just to see the town. He is going out to a Stanford preparatory school this fall."

Details of the home-going were being discussed when in rushed an avalanche of joyous girls to whom the glad news was announced.

"Well, you are both mighty lucky!" abruptly came "Little" Warren's say.

"I'll tell you what, Warney, you make the trip with us and go to Kansas City by way of Minneapolis. You know very well it is the shortest route." The merry circle broke into laughter.

"Marion is authority on making those 'around by' routes. I know whereof I speak," and Elizabeth's eyes twinkled. "We are going to Minneapolis by way of Boston." A second peal.

"Yes, sis," earnestly asserted Marion. "Come on, 'Little' Warren, and make it with us. We'll have no end of good times."

"I've a notion to do so," said "Little" Warren half seriously. "I'll write home about it tonight."

"Good!" was Marion's enthusiastic comment.

“And we’ll all go,” was the refrain from the other girls.

Soberly droned Marion,

“There was an old woman
Who lived in a shoe;”

And Elizabeth completed the quatrain,

“She had so many children
They crated her through —
To Boston.”

“Your fate; ’tis a crate! Will you come?”
laughed Marion.

Their rhyming fancy was decidedly broken by the vesper chimes, and they themselves soon scattered from the little room.

A week later “Little” Warren slipped her arm through Marion’s as they were walking from chapel, and pulled her to a side path. “I have two things to tell you, both of which I think will please you, Marion. First, mother and father are very willing to have me make the trip with you and Elizabeth *via* Boston, as far as Chicago.”

“Fine!” ejaculated Marion, “though I wish you could go home with us.

“Not this time. And in the second place,” reverted “Little” Warren, lowering her voice, “I’ve been looking into that matter of surrender and have decided to give Him a chance at my life, fair and square. I’ve been watching you lately in a special way. I always did think you were beau-

tiful, I might as well say it right out; but lately you have that same something about you which Miss Holman has, and I want it with all my heart."

"Oh!" was Marion's answer.

This exclamation was so full of feeling that "Little" Warren looked up quickly though heretofore she had avoided a full gaze; for somehow she thought thus she might the better resist being sentimental or foolish, two things she hated; and then, to let anybody know that she had a heart and heart longings wasn't exactly in her sphere. Somehow she had to make an exception this time with Marion. "But say, Mumsie, what are those tears coming down your face so rapidly for? Hope I haven't said the wrong thing."

"No, no! I'm so glad you are going to give over all to Christ. It is the only happy way to do, and your telling me that you saw something of the fruitage of that same decision in my life means more to me than I can put into words."

"All right. Just thought you might like to know. You'll help me out, if I get stuck, won't you?"

"All I can, Warney."

"Now I must go back. Thank you for coming with me. Glad I told you; I feel better now."

"Hello, there, Virginia; wait for us," called Marion as she saw her friend intently hastening on ahead of them. "You know you don't have to hurry now, you lazy seniors," she cheerily assured

as they came up to her. "I haven't seen you all day, Virgie."

"Good bye, I have something doing," and "Little" Warren started off in another direction.

"I've been pretty busy," said Virginia, filling in the gap.

"Do you know, Virgie, you are a perfect puzzle these days? You don't seem a bit happy, and soon I am to lose you. I did want these last days to be happy ones for us. Have you heard from Jack, and is he coming up for commencement?"

Ah, what a fatal mistake was that last remark, and how unconscious of its lodgment was it made!

"Yes, I had word to-day that he was coming. But these are not last days with us, Marion. You are going to visit me often in my home. You will run over Christmas and spring vacations, and many other times next year."

Virginia talked on almost incessantly to keep the conversation in her own hands, lest Marion would mention Jack Casey again, and then she fled at the first corner leaving Marion wondering as Virginia was saying, "Why I ever asked him I don't know; I simply couldn't help it."

The closing days came. Marion, at Virginia's request, took Jack Casey in charge; they had lively times. Virginia was a beautiful picture those days, with a certain impenetrable, serious touch that put both Marion and Jack at bay though they admitted

to each other that she was charming in this new *rôle*.

The last Virginia saw of Marion was on the morning after commencement when she went off on an early car calling "Good bye" tenderly yet cheerfully as she stood on the rear platform waving to Virginia.

"Yes, good bye, Marion, till Christmas; remember that belongs to me."

Marion nodded and was gone. Virginia's heart sank. She went out in the early dawn to walk around the lake, her last walk, and to be quieted by the morning coolness.

"Dear old Virginia! I hate to think she won't be back next fall."

"She's a fine girl, Marion. She was simply fascinating as class-day chairman."

"Yes she was, Elizabeth! What are you so quiet about, 'Little' Warren?"

A comical look came into "Little" Warren's eyes as she answered, "Oh, I was thinking just the same thing!"

They were soon aboard the train whisking off to Albany where they changed for the Berkshire line to Boston.

"Well, isn't this huge!" "Little" Warren had stepped upon the platform of the train for the Berkshire Hills.

"My! what funny, little, cane-bottomed seats," was Marion's contribution while Elizabeth in quiet

amusement stood by to watch the impressions upon those wide-awake Western girls.

"I declare, Elizabeth" — it was now "Little" Warren's turn — "I can just see Aunt Mary Anne seat herself in one of these straight, stiff-backed accommodations, made for her exactly, and she has been riding in them for forty years and more." With this she seated herself and smoothed the wrinkles out of her skirt, curved down the corners of her mouth, slicked her hair back over her ears, and glanced out the window with the complacent remark, "Yes, I'm quite in the spirit of it."

The girls were convulsed.

"'Pears to me like it was about time this train was startin'," she dryly remarked.

"No hurry, my dear little madam. We never hurry in this country," said Elizabeth. You know the Berkshires are as pretty a bit of scenery as there is in the country, and we never like to jar our nerves; just so we get there before sundown."

Droll as an owl came "Little" Warren's reply, "Yes, I suppose that's true; but I like to be startin' when I'm ready, though I surely don't want to go too fast; it would give me heart failure right off. Thomas, last thing he said was, 'Be careful, Mary Anne. Look out for your heart, and don't get on or off the train till it stops.' But I cal'late there's not much danger, for this train 'pears to stay s-t-o-p-p-e-d." With a tremendous jerk the cars

made a start and all three girls broke into a gale of laughter.

The little train had been deliberately wandering along the railroad track for a few hours when the important officer of affairs, the brakeman, togged out in overalls, appeared at the front end of the coach, as they stopped at a little village, and announced a ten minutes wait for all who wanted sandwiches which could be had in the station. The girls, hungry as bears, hustled off and came so abruptly upon the poor, little man behind the lunch counter that he was sorely distraught. He pulled his big, black-rimmed glasses farther down toward the end of his nose and peering over them asked, "What's the trouble?" They looked around for lunch stools, which were not in evidence. At last they made him understand that they wanted something to eat. He slowly took sandwiches off the shelf, put them into a paper bag, and handed the same over the counter. "Little" Warren took the bag, truly amazed at this novel way of serving luncheon. Elizabeth came up to save the situation from embarrassment, by saying, "Come, my friends, it would very much upset your digestion to eat so hurriedly as at a lunch counter in the station. We'll partake of our repast later when we are on the train and in no danger of nervousness from being left. I'll just get a bag of apples here, and then we are ready."

This mock seriousness of their guide and com-

panion was almost too much for them, but they managed to keep their equilibrium till they got out of the door, and thus saved the little man's feelings. They devoured their luncheon with increasing appetites as they took generous bites of the home-made bread and made way with the fresh, rosy cheeked apples.

The scenery that afternoon was beautiful, and they were grateful for the ambling gait of the train, a pace which afforded them plenty of time to appreciate the details of the nestling brooks, the quiet, little white farm-houses bosomed in the hills, and the picturesque farmer boy, sitting fishing and thinking, while the train pulled along the stream.

"Look at that fine old orchard! Wouldn't I like to get over that stone wall with a book and settle down for the afternoon?" Marion looked longingly toward the coveted spot.

"Everything is so peaceful and protected — so shut in. No broad sweeps here. Makes me think of a miniature landscape done up in small packages; just as dear as it can be!" "Little" Warren turned to Elizabeth with, "I don't wonder you New Englanders are fond of your country."

Marion scarcely took her eyes from the window. "It's rare, and seems hidden away in secluded spots from the modern push and recklessness!"

"I'm glad you like it," was Elizabeth's only reply as she looked out affectionately upon those

old-time, well-preserved, New England homesteads and the graceful curve of the hills.

The girls were brought to a sudden stand-still in their poetic fancies by "Little" Warren's remarking: "Our great and illustrious brakeman has turned engine oiler. Now I see why he has on those overalls instead of brass buttons and gold braid."

"How queer, though, to have his grease in a tea-kettle," was Marion's venture.

Meanwhile Elizabeth had all she could do to control herself as she saw their perplexity.

"I don't see what he is coming in here for," continued Marion.

"My stars! He's going to give that woman some," and "Little" Warren sat bolt upright.

With this remark Elizabeth gave way to a burst of laughter. Marion bent forward. "He has a glass! What is it, Elizabeth?"

"Just serving the passengers water, dear, after their mid-day repast."

"Well, I never! and out of that black, greasy, old teakettle, that looks as if it came over in the Mayflower. It must have quite a pedigree, and be very valuable, I suppose." Then a smile lurked about "Little" Warren's mouth.

The man by this time was standing opposite the girls who, he thought, were frivolous young things because they laughed so much. Nevertheless, he was generous enough to offer them a glass of the

sparkling water which he informed them he had got from the brook back yonder while the train had purposely waited.

The girls refused his delicacy, after which Marion assured Elizabeth that when she got out into the West she would find that each car had a modern accommodation called an ice-water tank, and that she needn't be looking for traveling tea-kettles, all of which information was good naturedly received.

Three days of Boston sight-seeing with rich experiences and they again took up their journey, this time toward the western lands, while "Little" Warren declared up and down that if they didn't do so their inquiring Marion, first thing they knew, would be marching up to a policeman asking him whether he considered Boston bags an absolute necessity, or whether they merely carried within their roomy compartments the treasured essence of that aristocratic air which spells *Boston* the world over.

Back they came to Albany, and from there they started westward on the Empire State Express. It was a rather busy time they had, getting located; but at last their section in the Pullman was found, and they seated themselves in the cushions of ease quite convinced that they were not going through the Berkshire Hills, and were doubly impressed with this fact when they looked out of the windows. "Little" Warren declared that the change to such speed, after her complacent wanderings, fairly

made her dizzy, for the telegraph poles, as the train flew by, looked like teeth in a fine comb.

Marion bent over and gave "Little" Warren, who sat facing her and Elizabeth, a pinch as she said warningly, "Beware of your conduct! A couple, truly coupled, and of some importance is seated opposite us."

"Little" Warren's quick glance took in the situation. "Whew! bride and groom, with her fascinating dove-colored gown and his bewitching button-hole sprig of orange blossom!"

"Be careful, 'Little' Warren or they'll hear you," nudged Marion.

"Oh, don't be anxious, Marion. They are too blissfully oblivious to everything except themselves to be conscious of 'Little' Warren's feelingly expressed sentiments," said Elizabeth, as she looked at them with a generous and amused smile, asking at the same time quite innocently if such actions were Western.

"Decidedly, no! It is New York! But the only thing that bothers me is that they are 'coming to.' They have cast eyes this way twice now. I fear they begin to surmise we are making fun of them," laughed Marion.

"It doesn't seem to stop proceedings. They evidently enjoy the spoon-holder," drowsily remarked "Little" Warren.

"Spoon-holder! and now what do you mean,

you little mischief?" Elizabeth waited for her answer.

"Simply a name I've christened their section," noddingly as she looked out of the window. "O girls! I have it," "Little" Warren continued.

The two girls turned to see her attentively looking into the long mirror between the windows of their section. "All performances safely viewed," she mused, when suddenly, as if energized by a pop-gun, she turned from the glass, where she had been watching the two across the way. In her embarrassment at meeting the glance of the man who had chanced to look into his mirror and see her gaze, red as a beet she turned to face him, for moved by the same impulse, he had likewise whisked about toward the aisle.

"Aha!" laughed Elizabeth. "Such mishaps always come to people who are spy-glasses."

For once "Little" Warren was completely subdued and meekly looked out the window, nor did she cheer up until the other two girls began to sing quietly some of their favorite college songs. Marion's clear, sweet soprano, and Elizabeth's rich, mellow alto blended well. At last came threading through their duet the delicate tenor of "Little" Warren who lost herself enough to become quite natural again.

The rest of the trip was comparatively uneventful. At Chicago the girls said good bye to

“Little” Warren who took her way south to Kansas City while they went on to Minneapolis.

After Marion and Elizabeth were aboard their train, leaving Chicago, Marion opened conversation as follows: “There is one thing I want to tell you before we reach home. I am engaged to be married to Eugene Whitmore whom you will probably see at the station.”

There was a tremble in Marion’s voice and a soberness about her which Elizabeth could not understand, for she missed the usual joyousness which naturally accompanies such news. “She is not happy,” she mentally jotted down. “Wonder if this has anything to do with her saying that she needed me this summer?” Her only response to Marion was, “I am glad you told me, dear.”

“No one knows, outside the family, not even Virginia, but I wanted you to know; and then I thought it would be easier for you while with us — you would feel less restraint, if you knew how it was.”

Elizabeth drew Marion to her and wearily the girl dropped her head upon the comfortable shoulder of her friend. Neither spoke for a long time.

Marion finally broke the silence. “I am so glad you know, Elizabeth. I want to tell you more another time. It will be such a relief to have some one to whom I can talk.”

Elizabeth's sympathetic touch told Marion that she was glad.

"I know, Elizabeth, by the way you have listened that you will understand."

"Your trust means much, Marion."

Two tired girls went to their berths that night but with the happy thought that in the morning they would find themselves in Marion's home city.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOME COMING

As Elizabeth stepped to the platform she saw two men and a youth coming toward Marion: one a middle-aged easy-going, good-natured sort of man who, she knew at a glance, was her friend's father; the other, a man of thirty-two or thirty-three years, tall, dark, and well-built and from his deeply penetrating, heart-searching eyes, as he looked into Marion's face, Elizabeth recognized him as the sweetheart. The boy came ambling up full of antics and with a dancing smile.

"Hello there, sis," and his frank, boyish voice won Elizabeth's heart then and there. "Glad to see you back, and old Gene, here, has been holding his watch in his hand for the last ten days."

Marion answered with a droll, little laugh, and turned to introduce Elizabeth who found in Mr. Mansfield's welcome a genial, fatherly interest. From George she received an honest, "We're glad to see you, Miss Field," and the boy's mental jotting, "Say, she's all right! We'll have some fun

which this everlasting love-business was about to cut out of my life this summer," and the gleeful brother danced a jig across the platform in celebration of his brightening prospects. As Elizabeth, a trifle embarrassed, met Eugene, his face expressed surprise and a quick interest while he scanned this new-comer, rare in the quality of her womanhood. In words he gave her only a formal greeting.

"He doesn't like me," thought Elizabeth, and Marion wondered at the expression which flitted across his face.

The situation was changed by George's calling out cheerily, "If you don't mind, Miss Field, I'll escort you on our homeward journey. Dad can be the chaperon and Gene and sis — oh, well! they go without saying;" and he marshaled Elizabeth down the platform with a backward glance at the acknowledged lovers as much as to say, "I'm sorry for you. 'Heart free and interesting be.'"

"I'll tell you what, we'll have some fun, Miss Field!"

"Won't we though," answered Elizabeth enthusiastically. What about, she was not quite sure.

"Say, I think this loving must be a mighty stupid occupation." He stopped short as if a new thought had arrested him. "I reckon Marion's told you all about it."

"Yes," laughed Elizabeth, "she has at least told me something about it; quite likely not all. And

why do you think it is stupid?" she asked to draw him out.

"Why! don't you?" asked the lad with the deepest amazement in his voice and already the shadow of disappointment threatening to come, if she didn't agree.

"Oh, of course!" was the quick response.

"I knew you would. You're that kind," and his admiration very plainly showed in that last sentence.

"You see," he continued, "it's like this;" and he started out to deliver his opinions on the subject of love-making. "My observations have been that it's the same thing over and over, each chapter like the last, with no intermission or exit for respite." Here he cleared his throat and squared his shoulders. "Furthermore, as there is no variation of subject so there is no variation of personalities, identically the same thing day in and out; and the worst of it is they are only two. Mighty stupid business, to my mind — just seeing the same girl all the time and talking about the same thing forever! Now that's what I call monotony, and the part that sticks me is that they seem to dote on monotony, and if a fellow comes along to try to help them out and give them an interesting bit of that variety which, the world over, is acknowledged spice, he's told it's an intrusion and given to understand that the breaking of their blissful monotony is not appreciated though the fellow does it

from the goodness of his heart and for a purely missionary enterprise." Here he broke off with, "To be continued in the next," as the rest of their company caught up with them.

After a quick trip across the city, they found themselves at the door of the Mansfield home, where the mother stood waiting. Marion, with genuine, girlish heartiness, thrust her friend into her mother's arms before she herself had had her mother's embrace. Such generous thoughtfulness was almost too much for Elizabeth, and she bit her lips to keep back the tears. The same look as that she had seen at the station again came over Gene's face except that it was intensified.

The morning meal was more a satisfying of the heart hunger than of the physical hunger, for they were happy at being a united family again. In this, Elizabeth was made to feel that she was a part of them. She had never known such a family atmosphere and in those first hours it was a heavy struggle for her to keep that ever present organ, her heart, from lodging square across her throat. Grateful, she was, that so many family questions, arising from the months of separation, released her from entering too much into the morning's conversation.

As soon as she could do so after breakfast-time, she excused herself and withdrew to her room where she threw herself across the bed and sobbed out her loneliness as if her heart would break.

There were conflicting emotions — of gratitude, that it was her privilege to share the comforts and love of such a home for the next three months, and of fear lest the contrast of her lonely wandering life might unnerve her to meet the future. As she lay there torn with the uncertainty of the summer's outcome, she at last fell into a sleep of relief.

The latter part of the morning Marion came to her. She entered the room after repeated gentle taps of inquiry to find Elizabeth still sleeping, and seeing traces of tears she bent with pain and questioning over the upturned face she loved so dearly. It was all so new, this realization that her friend, strong as she was, could yield to such overpowering emotion as was now evident. Marion was fastened to the spot until she was aroused by the piercing thought that it might be an intrusion for her to be reading so much of her friend's heart, taking advantage of her unconscious moments. She straightened up and looked out of the window while the resolution was forming that she must leave, though it seemed she could not desert Elizabeth in this distress. She was, however, arrested as she turned to go by Elizabeth, who having awakened had been studying Marion's face for the last moment. She caught her hand and startled her.

“Elizabeth!”

“I wakened so quietly and found you beside me, looking far away and saddened. I know you

read something of the sorrow in my life, but I don't mind, my loved one."

Marion's arms enfolded the girl as she kissed the tears away.

"I am so weak, Marion; such a baby! Why is it?"

"Dear, you are not weak, but you are brave and true!" Marion's sensitive nature would not permit her to ask any questions. She simply said, "We'll stand together."

Elizabeth's deep sigh that broke away from old restraint was only a forerunner of her words, "My comfort, my helper! I find I am turning more and more to you. It all seems so strange for, heretofore, it has been my lot to live to myself — to conquer alone or to fail alone. Now I find myself turning to you, even in my struggles wanting you near; you give me courage. There is a calm, inner strength you have which is from a source that I had not known until I met you. I have been accustomed to feel my assurance in physical vitality; it has always been so great that I have felt I could do anything I undertook, but it has all been different since I have known you. I see, now, that in the past when I thought I had succeeded I failed. You have given me different standards. Then, too, I used to think, if affairs didn't come out right, oh, well! I'm young, and my shoulders are broad; but these days I have learned from you that human results are not divine results, and

that Christ can conquer in all things, if I will give Him the right of way to make what may seem a temporal failure into eternal success."

Marion's eyes got larger and larger with surprise as Elizabeth poured her heart out as fast as words could flow.

"I see you are wondering where I got all this, my Marion." Elizabeth smiled. "Right from your own life, beloved. I have often seen in these last months evidences of an inner struggle and the peace that marks conquest, while others observed only the happy smile of their Mary. I questioned till I heard you pray in the first committee meeting, after the fresh cut into that precious heart; then I knew, and I longed for the same thing. Teach me this summer how to pray, Marion."

"Oh, Elizabeth! I am just a beginner, myself. What can I teach? But all that's mine is yours."

"That's all I ask; that's all I want; I am content. I am almost ashamed to tell you why I cried myself to sleep, and yet it hurts not to have you know. It's queer; I never before wanted any body to know me. I always kept a little reserve corner of my life that nobody saw. It has been a habit of mine to let people see only the strong side and—I have been proud of my strength. O Marion, promise that you won't despise me for it, but that you will love and help me! When I let you look clear, deep down you'll see so much that is unattractive—I'm almost afraid—you are so beau-

tiful — yet I must. Tell me you'll love me through it all."

As Marion heard this broken pleading in word and tone and felt her trembling emotions she could but cover Elizabeth's face with kisses and assure her over and over that her love was eternal, nothing could break it. She marveled, however, as she saw this girl, who had always stood to her as a perfect personification of strength, now helpless and clinging to her.

Elizabeth pushed herself away a little and looked into Marion's eyes as she said, "It was nothing much that made me weep and that is why I am provoked at myself. As I sat in your family circle this morning, and contrasted your life with mine, I felt so homeless and so lonely that my courage broke and I was foolish and didn't care much what came; so many obstacles were across my pathway and others seemed to have such a headway. I feared, too, that the joys of your home would unnerve me for the battle, so I became a coward. You found me, and now I'm myself again."

Elizabeth's smile and quiet assertion told Marion plainly that her friend had regained her usual composure. As she drew Elizabeth to her to whisper that she was not homeless and alone so long as she lived, and to quote with a new meaning, "All that is mine is yours," she again heard the tremor in the voice as Elizabeth answered, "Thank you! It's too much."

“Elizabeth, what did you mean that you must tell me?”

“What I have told you, dear, of my pride, my self-centered conception of life, and my cowardice.”

“Can it be, Elizabeth, that you think the rest of us are free from these sins?”

“Ah, you have never had the self to fight that I have had! I know you have never had the *ego* in your life that I have; yes, the egotism — I say it right out. I had been blind to it all these years till I saw Miss Holman, and then became your friend. I know what blinded me: my sins. I aimed high, and for the best things, and the ends I was striving to reach, because they were good, made me believe that all in me was good. I did not see that my beginnings, my motives, were for self rather than for Christ. I did not see that instead of gaining best things, I should gain the best life, our Lord, and then that the other things would follow. Christ was never a live personality to me till I heard Miss Holman talk. You have helped to make Him my companion. I have never prayed much till this winter.” Elizabeth stopped sharply.

After a few moments pause, she started out again, as if on an entirely different line. “Marion, I’ve been thinking I owe it to you to tell you a bit about my life and relationships, since you have trusted me in your home for the summer. I can never tell you what that trust without a question has meant. You have brought me into the heart of

your family life, and now I want you to know that though I seem to be a wanderer without family or home to sustain me, the blood in my veins is true. On both my father's and my mother's side have been some of the most loyal patriots of the English crown. I am not ashamed of my family inheritance. My own home has been broken, but beyond that there is the clearest record. You are not receiving one of whom you may be afraid."

The flush had swept to the roots of Elizabeth's hair. She might have needed to go no further back than her grand-parents on both sides to establish her connections with the house of Stanley and the house of Neville but her modesty forbade.

"Dear heart, never for one moment have I doubted you." Marion was very quiet as thought flitted: "The very poise of her head shows family. Well born? I know I have always felt a certain awe in her presence. How fair she has tried to be with me in her feeling that my faith warrants certain facts about herself."

"Elizabeth, how did this branch of your family get to America?"

"My grandmother, on my father's side, married beneath her station, and it was pleasanter for the new home to be established away from traditions. On my mother's side, my grandfather was a younger son and struck for the West to make his own name and fortune. For myself, my mother died when I was a wee bit of a girl. I was brought

up by a friend and earned my own way from the time I was fourteen. My father," she grew white, almost stern — "he is gone; I can't say much about him."

A pause, then, "Marion have you ever wondered why I am not a church member?"

"Why, Elizabeth! Aren't you?" Marion checked her surprise. "I see why you haven't been more active in Y. W. You are going into some church, aren't you?"

"I thought you knew. I am going to join some day. I never associated with church people until I went away to school, and it has taken time for me to accustom myself to their ways. The Association work has made a special appeal to me, just from its every day naturalness. My! Marion, but I have enjoyed college! I couldn't go into its life as much as I'd like because I have had to help myself by writing for the newspapers and for some of the magazines; but then, I guess I get enough."

She laughed, but Marion saw behind the laugh some of the disappointments that had been put down; her intuition told her of the girlish eagerness that must have constantly been curbed. It started this child of tender care to perceive for the first time the full freedom she had always enjoyed during her own college days. Her question was now answered and sadly answered — why Elizabeth had not been more prominent in the life at Exmoor. Her heart was full but she could not let

Elizabeth know the pain of proffered pity, for even though her frankness seemed to deny the thought of pride, still she was to her the proud Elizabeth.

The luncheon bell rang. Both girls were brought to the sudden demands of daily necessities. Before they left the room, Elizabeth put her hands on Marion's shoulders and as she looked into those eyes she loved she said, "You have been most patient with me. Why I have come to you with the first confession of my life, I don't know. I must not weary you, but it has rested me so to share it with another and I thank you from the depths of my soul."

"Weary me, Elizabeth, mine own! Never say that again; I long to know all of your life that you will give me. You have been so brave, you help me to know my own duty."

Elizabeth's only response was, "I do not understand."

CHAPTER XIV

PASSING THE TIME

The summer weeks, one by one, were passing, and new problems, new questions, new joys, new struggles were keeping pace with the weeks for the Mansfield household. What a staunch protector, what a kindly benefactor the curtain of time is! The light and the darkness in their majestic succession alone have the power to give each day's possessions into our living. The hours flow by and we take and make or we take and break according to our fidelity to the Master.

Elizabeth was much worn in mind and body, so that after some motherly persuasions on the part of Mrs. Mansfield, as well as sympathetic counsel from Mr. Mansfield, she consented to lay aside work with the exception of making up some back credits in German in order to complete her college course in three years, and to give her vacation to rest. Her place in the home was being firmly established. She found herself slipping into the place of sister to Marion. It was no uncommon introduc-

tion for Mrs. Mansfield to present her to the family friends as another daughter.

One day in the beginning, Marion had caught her hand as she was passing through the hall: "I was so happy to hear mother call you our other daughter, this afternoon. Tell me, will you really and truly be my sister? I have never had one."

"O Marion! yes, a thousand times yes! No greater joy could come to me." The words had almost choked Elizabeth as they rushed from her heart, so long alienated from any family relationships.

This was only one manifestation of the various ways in which Elizabeth Field was entering into the lives of these newly given friends.

The summer evenings brought many a country drive in the Mansfield carry-all. It was on one of these occasions that Horace Mansfield made a discovery within himself — a discovery that almost stifled him. They had left their own summer cottage at Lake Minnetonka and driven that Saturday to one of the smaller, and less frequented lakes, distant some ten miles, in order to spend the afternoon and evening. It was just the home circle with a very simple luncheon for their evening repast as was usually their custom on such unceremonious expeditions.

Most frequently on these outings George had undisputed right over Elizabeth's time and thought, but this was an impossibility on this special night,

as he had taken himself off with a ten days' camping party. Consequently, Horace Mansfield found it his duty as well as his pleasure to care for Elizabeth's happiness that evening. They rented rowboats, and then followed a two-and-two process of entertainment for the twilight hours. Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield smiled to see Horace and Elizabeth angle off to one side of the lake, while Gene and Marion struck out in the opposite direction.

Horace and Elizabeth talked of the sky coloring, the artistic curves in the contour of the lake, Mrs. Wharton's new book as a character study and plot developer, modern socialism, the leaping fish at their side, the hair-breadth escapes of their childhood and whatever was at hand to take up the time. Suddenly Horace wheeled his drifting boat about with the sudden realization that it was getting far into the evening.

They pulled up to the shore to find Marion and Gene also coming in, a fact which spoke rather loudly for their own loitering capacity; the parents were waiting for both couples. Soon all were briskly driving homeward, Marion with a new thought about Elizabeth that she dared not breathe to a soul, the father and mother in hopeful uncertainty, Elizabeth herself simply conscious that the quiet drifting passed too quickly, and Horace determined to think it out when he could get alone. The drive home in the moonlight and the cooling breeze furnished enjoyment. They sang college songs,

old songs, new songs, all sorts of songs. As Marion led out in the soprano, Elizabeth came in with her deep contralto, while Horace took the tenor, and Gene supported with the bass.

If one had gone by the Mansfield cottage that night, some few hours later, and could have pierced the haze in the waning light of the moon, one would have seen, on an upper balcony, a lone man sitting motionless, with his feet up on the railing and his gaze bent steadily into the distance. He was a man of average size, fair hair, blue eyes that always followed a straight line squarely and never knew a dodge, and of demeanor quiet, calculating, thoughtful. If the observer had known this same young man he would have recognized him as Horace Mansfield, a Yale graduate, now a partner with his father in the profession of law, a student but a man of keen humor who could furnish his supply of funny stories; a man, also, who had never been known to go with the same girl twice in succession.

Could that same observer have looked into Horace Mansfield's thought he would have gleaned something from the following meditation: "I, a man of twenty-eight to fall completely in love with a school girl — a sophomore — and without any warning from the good Fates! H-m! never knew it till this night, the twentieth day of July, 19—. She doesn't care a rap for me. George is her comrade in stock. What in the name of all that's

reasonable am I going to do about it? Just kept her out on the lake as long as I dared to and then all but cursed the oars that would be nothing but passive instruments of my knocking conscience. Jolly! Whew! but she must have been a 'dandy' when she was a youngster! I can imagine her playing that she was the Pope and making the neighboring youngsters carry her robe, furnish her equipage. I can see her, as if I had been there yesterday, on that vicious colt galloping over the hills."

His merriment abruptly changed to a groan as he again perceived Elizabeth developed into the woman. The groan startled him. He got up, shook himself, went down stairs, out to the lake shore where he paced his feelings into composure in time with the beating of the waters against the beach.

He resumed: "I'll drop the whole affair. Perhaps warm weather makes warm hearts. God only knows how it will come out." This was said reverently and the compressed lips showed the resolution of the man. "When I have been separated from her for a year, and she has gone more deeply into her college course, then I'll know myself better and she will be better prepared to receive what I have to say, — if I have anything."

After five or six miles rapid walking he was back again in his room, soon falling into an exhausted sleep yet convinced that the fight was over and that he could trust to time to tell the rest. Little did he know the returning persistency of love. Well

that he didn't, or he could not have faced the summer and the coming months with the calmness that later was daily given him and that so effectively screened his feelings.

What a relief that younger brother was, even though he was a perpetual torment! Back he came from his camping party the next day to fill in the chinks of time and conversation. Horace daily blessed the presence of this unsuspecting lad.

As the elder brother came up on the porch that afternoon, having returned from the city, he heard the boy giving a full account of his fishing days to Elizabeth who was resting in a porch chair while the youth was taking a lean-to on the rail.

"Hello, old boy!" was Horace's greeting with a twitch of the lad's cap that sent it several feet across the lawn. A friendly knock-to from George that grew into a lively scuffle of the brothers and they had effected their mutual welcome. George was an ardent admirer of his athletic brother and was ever ready for a bout.

"As I was about to say," continued George with a flourish, again seating himself on the rail, while Horace passed in with a cheery greeting to Elizabeth. "Well, what was I about to say?" was the bewildered, embarrassed question which was quickly followed by the excuse, "I was thrown off the track by that con— no! I mean," and his broad grin articulated with a queer look in Eliza-

beth's eyes, "that brother of mine confounded me, threw me off my track."

His listener broke into a hearty laugh; it was too much for her. "Let me see," she said slowly, "you were telling me you didn't need dish towels to dry your dishes; you just washed them at the water's edge, laid them up on the bank, and the sun did the rest—"

"Oh, yes! and then what?" meditatively.

"Why the advantage of washing in the lake, rather than in a pan."

"That's it; now I've got it! You see what we washed off coaxed up the fish— sometimes it was pretty thick, too. We didn't do much scraping off the dishes. My, but we had the jolliest catches, the dandiest trout, m-m-m-! Wish you'd been along. You like to fish, don't you?"

"I should say!"

"We fished till midnight, lots of nights." He was again assured of his friend's good comradeship.

"Say, what do you catch back East?"

"Eel, when we can get them," laughed Elizabeth.

"Have you ever?" His eyes were wide open.

"Not very often; sometimes."

"I bet I could, if I only got the chance. I know how to land 'em."

"Crabs are great sport," continued Elizabeth.

"You know you go out in row boats, take nets, let

down a string with raw meat, and just dip the crabs up in the nets when they get well into their dinner. But the fun begins when some of them get loose in the boats and fight and pinch and take a nip out of your ankles, if they get a chance."

"Say, that must be great."

"Lively!" laughed Elizabeth.

An interruption rushed upon them in the form of Marion, red as a June apple; and the words sputtered out, "Read that, Elizabeth," as she handed her friend a note.

A surprised "Well!" long drawn out as she read, and then a questioning glance at Marion which immediately broke into a hearty laugh, a laugh plainly at Marion's expense, as she looked into the distressed face. Immediately she repented. "Never mind, honey, dear! Count on me. I'll take care of Jack Casey for you. And so, Mary mine, he's coming out on business, I believe." This last full of meaning.

"Who the deuce is Jack Casey, sis?"

"A friend of ours," was Marion's only response which plainly said in tone, "Now don't ask me any more about it," as she sat down in the hammock, simply wilted.

"Say, sis, how'll Gene like that? He'll have to keep mum, won't he? Eh?"

"You rascal!" Marion had to laugh.

"And say! When is he coming, sister Marion, and how long will it take him to pop the question?"

He edged up to the hammock in the most concerned manner.

She looked up a little bit defiantly and with the tease in her eyes. "He comes to-morrow afternoon; the length of time is most uncertain; and how do you know but Elizabeth is the one in question, young man? *You'd* better be looking out."

A low whistle from George as he glanced toward Elizabeth and then to Marion again. "I don't believe it; she's not that kind; she likes to *fish* and do sensible things."

Both girls could contain their merriment no longer, and as they broke forth the lad was most gratified to hear the dinner call.

The news was given at the dinner table and Marion emphasized the fact that Mr. Jack Casey was merely a college acquaintance of hers and Virginia's. He would probably not more than call or take dinner with them.

George had a few "thinks" of his own, but they were quite as brief as the contemplated call of the stranger would be.

Marion was glad Gene was coming over that evening so that he might know and be there the following night for dinner. He took the announcement quietly; said he would be glad to come, if he could; but business was pressing. Marion's concern showed in her face. "Gene, dear, you simply must come, if it is a possible thing. Surely, you don't

have to work such long hours. Tell me you will, dear; I must have you."

"I will make every effort, my dearest!"

His quiet, reassuring smile brought gladness to Marion's heart, while the hidden tempter was giving him a surprised attack.

The next day brought its own sunshine and its cloud.

Horace Mansfield, at Marion's request, called at the hotel, where she was to send her reply to the note, to invite the gentleman in question out to dinner.

That evening Jack Casey made his way into the hearts of the Mansfield family, with as little effort as he had used a few hours previous in falling into his dress suit. It was always so with him, an old adage long proved. In fact, Mr. Mansfield took such a liking to him that then and there before all he insisted that, after business was over, Mr. Casey must come out and spend a few days with them; fishing was good, sailing excellent, and he must certainly confer the favor upon them. Of course the rest of the family had to join in cordially, even Marion, or be conspicuous. It came about, therefore, that after due pressure, Jack Casey decided to be most happy to accept the invitation and to arrive the following Wednesday.

Gene was asked and also a girl friend to complete the house party. Marion was glad to have the excitement and diversion that always were sure

to come with a house party. She had been rather unsettled, discontented lately. She didn't know just why.

Jack went away that evening as happy as a lark over the good sport in store for him, while he was convinced that Marion was more beautiful than ever; and he was interested in becoming better acquainted with Miss Field. He turned his thoughts to Mr. Mansfield: "Say, he's a jolly old chap! Well, I guess!"

After two days of planning and preparation the Mansfield ranch was ready to be taken possession of, and Wednesday night's dinner saw the assembled merry-makers forging a good beginning, not only upon Mrs. Mansfield's culinary department but also upon the hours of wit and humor, sport and laughter. Marion was proud of Gene that night as she saw how gracefully he was holding the unity of the evening, and blending the various forces together. Nobody else knew how the result came, but she marked it. The day was closed with music from their impromptu male quartette. Jack Casey took first tenor, Horace, second, while Mr. Mansfield's bass was paralleled by Gene's clear, mellow and less heavy tones. "That's splendid! We must have much music out on the lake; don't you think?" Marion was in her element.

The company broke up to fall into the sleep that would make another day worth living.

Marion, when alone with Elizabeth, breathed a

happy little sentence before she fell into oblivion. "I believe it is going to be the best house party possible and that Jack Casey is going to be just as unconcerned as he always has been."

Elizabeth drew Marion to her and kissed her while within herself she wasn't quite sure. "He's a fine fellow," she ventured.

"I should say! I like him better every time I see him. He's a Christian, too, Elizabeth." Marion felt reprovèd as she said this and grew conscious of the comparison she was making, while Elizabeth wondered if Eugene Whitmore was a Christian. The conversation, however, soon whiffed in another direction concerning the evening's proceedings, and both girls forgot the momentary discomfort.

The next day George took a tramp. That Jack Casey was interfering with his plans! With high indignation he stamped along. "You don't suppose, do you, George Mansfield, that she would be such a fool as to get struck, too? Said she'd look after Jack Casey, and Marion made that implication. Cracky, I don't like that! Here, Elizabeth and I have just been having a decent time of it. Don't see what I'd done this summer without her; she's a tramp! Don't see why that old chump has to be hanging around, and hanging around now for; don't see why dad had to be so persistent. One hanger-on's enough for me. By Jove! I won't have it." George resolutely dug his hands into his

pockets. "I'll take her off fishing with me every day, I will! Joy, but I'd like to knock him down!" A chuckle and a whistle were a preface to, "I'd like to take him fishing. I'd dump him. May be that would dampen his spirits — if I could manage it before the girls when he had his Knox straw and ermine on." George threw his head at a side angle assumed a dandy's attitude and the Eastern dialect to the best of his ability. "I'll fix 'im some-way, 'I'll be dumbed if I don't!" as uncle Jimmy says. For my part, I don't see why they couldn't let Elizabeth and me alone and get a girl for Casey, if he had to have one. Horace and Alice will make a good team all right. Elizabeth and I always do get on famously and then get Jane Coe or Helen Jordan or Mate Marshall — any of them would do for him. I'll bet I'll make it pretty warm for 'im any how." His queer grin was the omen of some unforeseen happening to the aforesaid house party, as he turned to take his deliberate way back home.

And really the only interruptions to their daily plans were those occasioned by the unaccountable George who after all did have to confess to himself that Casey was not such a bad fellow. George was their healthy stimulant that often saved them from dangerous driftings. They never knew when he was to appear, or how, — this good-natured lad with plenty of ingenuity.

One evening at the dinner table, George told

the family that he had seen a queer man wandering about that afternoon; he believed that he was a crazy man. The family asked a few questions and thought no more about it. That night as the various twos were quietly enjoying the moonlight from the several balconies or other places, George was in the music room fingering over a jig at a lively rate. A strange rumble was heard. It repeated. People began to look about, to come into the house to ask, "What was that?"

By the time all had arrived George was hopping about. "That crazy man! Where is he?"

It was suggested that the sound came from the attic. Horace and Jack Casey took to this upper region with candles, but nothing was doing. The spectre was satisfied for awhile, at least, and all quieted down, after the affair had been laughed off. They stayed together, however, for the rest of the evening, since the girls did not seem inclined to do otherwise.

The next night, at the fatal hour, the same noise occurred again more loudly than before. George was sitting on the rail opposite the hall door talking quietly to his father, who, if he had been shrewd in observation, would have seen his son swinging his legs rather vigorously. Again the crowd gathered and again nothing could be found. Everybody located the noise in a different place. As they were about to settle down, once more, in assembled conversation, — this time in the music

room — Marion caught a truant smile on George's face. She walked straight across the room and, shaking her finger in his face, said with the air of a convicting judge, "George Mansfield, you are at the bottom of this whole thing. Out with it."

He looked almost beseeching and yet defiant as he answered, "Never!"

Her laugh could be restrained no longer. They called from the court room, "Search him! search him!" a process which began immediately. They found nothing. Then came the call, "His room!" The convicting party started up stairs, where the secret of his plot was laid bare.

He had tied loosely together a pair of dumb bells, improvised for them a pulley from the top of his bed-post, and attached them to a long cord which he brought out into the hall; then fastening the string to his ankle he began his lively gyrations in time with his music. The jiggling caused the bells to fall tumbling to the bare floor, again and again. The second night the porch had been his seat of operation. Both times he had snapped the cord too quickly to be discovered when investigation began.

His defense from their condemnation was that he just wanted to save them from being too exclusive by stirring them up a bit. Moonlight was dangerous, he avowed, if it caught people in too small companies. Jack Casey took the plaintiff's part and declared to Mistress Judge, that in his opinion, the

court ought to render a verdict of release, which was granted on the merit of the cleverness of the lad, and the stupidity of a crowd that could be so easily fooled, for two nights running.

To find the breakfast chairs linked together with a stout cord was nothing. One evening at dinner, as a mere incident of the day, each gentleman, but the father, found at his plate a huge bouquet of bachelor's buttons.

Thus the days came and went, with their variety often furnished by George. They were days filled with fishing, tennis, golfing, sailing, music and visiting; days for many plans to hatch, air-castles to quiver in the balance of uncertainty, troubles to brew; days for hearts to be glad, hearts to be sad, these days of the house party. If you want to put all ingredients together to bring the most unlooked for and yet surely expected results, just call together a house party. Choose charming girls with attractive escorts, place them near the water, boating accessible, breezes balmy, music plentiful, and let the days fall in, fall out, as they may, — there you have the complete recipe for the desired effect.

Although there was little actually partial pairing off there were many conjectures in this present company, and although there was much sensible outdoor life and general interest, it must be confessed that some particular interests as well as dreams were indulged in.

The week end reached, Jack Casey took his departure, the company dispersed, and outward composure and quiet were once more manifest in the household.

It was a week that brought a new wonder into Horace Mansfield's heart. Was Jack Casey a disinterested person? Did he really care for anybody? Did he care for Elizabeth Field? What if he did? What right or reason had he, himself, to expect anything more than Casey had to expect? May be Casey had the right of way, or at least some reason. He thumped away through his work, day after day, with no conclusions at hand.

In the meanwhile, Eugene Whitmore was putting himself through a course of questionings. Something in Marion had made him uneasy these last months, — since the spring time, in fact. He had felt more and more that some lack in him was being a disappointment to her whom he loved. She had written him much of Miss Field, and when she arrived it had crossed his mind that perhaps she was satisfying Marion's affection. "She's capable enough to do so and Marion to all appearances is most content with her friend." What did Elizabeth have that he did not?

Later, when he saw Jack Casey, the trouble began anew. He liked him. He saw his good points. He told himself he wouldn't blame Marion or anybody else for liking that sunny fellow. The old struggle for preëminence waged on! He put it

down again and again. He was sad. He was weighted down. Was Jack Casey going to be disappointed or was he? Which ought to be? The light was dying out of his heart; a storm was brewing; he detected it himself, in Marion. Work was his only help, work alone his savior, as it had always been. So he threw himself headlong into his activities. His interests in the Civic League, just then, were demanding the most level-headed considerations. His responsibilities on the Settlement Board were growing heavier because of the new addition to be made. Then, he had promised the newsboys a picnic soon.

This Mr. Whitmore was always doing things for them. He was their kind of "gent" every time. He could bat 'em out in base ball every hit — make a clean sweep of it, one of them had assured Mr. Mansfield; and now he was going to show 'em pretty soon, an afternoon that was one. May be next week he'd get up a picnic. He was going to teach 'em how to do clean wrestling, too; he had given his word for it. A junior member of the craft had ventured all the above information to Mr. Mansfield while pausing a moment in the office after bringing in the morning paper.

Late in the afternoon Eugene Whitmore was about to step on the car to betake himself to his apartments, when a small voice called out, "How-d'y', Mr. Whitmore!"

"Hello there, Johnny! Give me a paper. How's your sale to-day?"

"First rate, sir!" The shine beamed out through his face as he looked up at his hero.

Mr. Whitmore boarded his car thinking no more of the lad. When he left, a mile or so farther on, he found the little fellow waiting for him.

"Well! How did you come here, Johnny!" in utter bewilderment.

"Just thought I'd see you home to-night, Mr. Whitmore," and he grinned joyously.

Eugene lost speech for a moment as they walked together. Soon he was himself again. "I'm glad you did, young man. Wish we might have ridden together." He had reached his door by this time. "Just come right in with me."

"Eh?" the boy grunted, "Can't to-night; thank y'u."

"Yes, you must; come right along. In a few moments we'll go out to dinner." He pulled the lad in, and the two passed a most congenial hour, after which he started Johnny down street, fifty cents the better off, and the happiest child in the city. He and his Mr. Whitmore had *chummed* together. Gene had sent forth a gleeful lad, but the boy had given him peace. What a balm, that child's devotion! Somebody loved him, he knew, and true! Not only newsboys had occasion to bless Gene Whitmore, but many a country youth stranded in the city, a stranger among strangers, had found

him a friend. His companions were always seeing Whitmore stroll into the Club with a "stray" under his arm, or at every turn running upon him at the bowling alley with a "greeny" whom he was teaching. Patient? A veritable Job!

Turning his every spare moment in such ways as these, trying to bring gladness to the hearts of others, he was keeping his own sorrow more and more under cover. Scarcely a day went by that somebody did not come to him for personal counsel, or help of some kind. No one ever found him too busy to listen, or too self-absorbed to be sympathetic. While his own heart was aching he was giving comfort to others, glad that business of this sort was making heavy demands upon him at this particular time. So he coursed through the summer weeks.

CHAPTER XV

GENEVA

August approached, and with it the Student Conference of the Young Women's Christian Association at Lake Geneva. Marion had been planning for many months to be at this Conference, and lately she had put forth some strenuous effort to persuade Elizabeth to go with her. At last, one morning, Elizabeth gave in when Marion urged her own happiness and need, arguments she had been loath to use before.

"Elizabeth, I know that this ten days in camp with five or six hundred college girls seeking Christ and His will, and with such people to guide as Miss Holman, is going to bring into my life a priceless possession, a strength, a courage, a knowledge that I must have in order to live. I should feel wretchedly unhappy those ten days without you, conscious that you, too, were not getting that same support."

Marion grew very earnest as she continued: "It would be different if you could not have it.

It is yours if you will only accept. It seems almost a sin to throw such an opportunity away, dear. I have been praying all summer that Geneva would bring much into your life." Marion paused questioningly, while Elizabeth looked at her, seemingly thinking the ground over.

"Well, I will, Marion. I know that if ever a person needed help, I do. If it will make me a better friend to you, I want to go; but I am under so many obligations to your father now that I hesitate."

"Remember that you are my sister, Elizabeth." There was a tone of reproof in her voice. "Daughters do not know obligation; it's all love. And that other remark, may I amend it, Elizabeth, to 'making a better friend to Christ,' not to me?" Marion's face lighted up as she bent toward her friend.

Almost despairingly and hopelessly Elizabeth replied, "I have many things to learn, Marion. You are so patient with me. I wish I felt Christ as near to me as I feel you."

"I'll leave that to Geneva and Miss Holman." Marion confidently linked her arm in Elizabeth's and took her off to her mother's room to talk over plans.

Two weeks passed, and the girls were on their way to the beautiful Wisconsin lake, hearts aglow as they anticipated — they scarcely knew what. The train they took from Chicago out to Williams Bay

was worse than college coaches out from Albany in the fall. Every available space was filled. There was laughing, singing, chattering everywhere. Suit cases and girls were tumbled in most promiscuously and nobody seemed to mind.

Marion and Elizabeth slipped down into a seat near the door, feeling a trifle strange among these western college women. Every face was new, a discovery which brought a sense of loneliness to them. "How different, when we get into New York state in September," they were thinking.

"Elizabeth, I don't know what I should do without you. Everybody seems to know everybody, but I don't see a soul I ever put eyes on before."

The words were scarcely spoken when a shout, half way down the car, arrested the attention of those about. "Why, Marion Mansfield! Where in the world did you come from?"

A young woman was making her way at a furious rate over rattling suit-cases to Marion, who in turn was as red as a pepper at being made conspicuous. She recognized Genevieve Stone, one of the graduates of the previous year. The girl was obviously surprised at seeing Marion there and asked, with uncertainty, if she were going to Geneva.

Marion's embarrassment had lessened as people resumed their previous interests. She felt the cut of surprise in her friend's question; but it didn't hurt as it would have done some months before.

She was glad to tell Genevieve of the change in herself as well as to be relieved at finding herself in company with some one who had been at Geneva, and knew the ins and outs, the ways and customs of this unique place. They arrived at Williams Bay, and the two little steamers gathered up the crowd to bear them across the lake to the Association camp. What a delightfully cool evening ride that was after the hot, crowded steam-cars!

Attractive, white-gowned girls were waiting at the dock to welcome the weary travelers and to escort them to the dining room.

Marion and Elizabeth had not been long at the table before Miss Holman was bending over them for a hasty greeting. A deep thump went on down in Elizabeth's heart, and Marion was conscious of the joy of having found what she was seeking.

After supper they went to their tent, curious to see their abode, of four bed-rooms and a sitting room to be shared with some State University girls who had already been there and made the place look attractive with banners, sofa-pillows and blankets.

"How fine, Elizabeth!" And Marion ran up the tent steps to investigate farther. "Oh, but I can scarcely wait till we get our things out! Isn't it charming? I'd like to stay here a month!"

Three of the unknown occupants hereupon approached. Self-introductions were brief, and they sat down on their tent-porch as old friends.

A wondering happiness was filling Elizabeth's life. She could not imagine the length and breadth of these next days. Later in the evening she pulled Marion off alone for a walk down by the water's edge. They took a secluded, rustic foot-path made clear only by the moonlight. Neither girl said anything for some time. Finally Marion stopped, leaning her head against a tree while a great, deep sob burst from her. Elizabeth's quiet but solicitous inquiries could bring no answer from her except, "Oh! I don't know, Elizabeth! My heart is too full. I get weary at times and am not brave. Geneva is going to settle some things for me."

The days came and went, similar in their outward program, though many a girl's inner life was undergoing a transformation. How often Marion and Elizabeth walked out under the trees, sometimes alone, sometimes together. They also met many another girl so doing.

One afternoon Elizabeth gave expression to what had been passing in the minds of both girls. "Do you know, it seems awfully queer to me to see the natural way in which these girls go straying off alone with their Bibles under their arms, and then when I am taking a walk to find this one under one tree and that one under another reading away, all absorbed and as unconscious of people who are about as the trees are themselves? I don't know why people should be secret about reading their Bibles, come to think about it; but somehow they

do seem to take to their closets when they read that book, if they read it at all. It's an inheritance of the race, Marion. Guess Satan's after us, sure enough!" An uncomfortable half-laugh, half-ejaculation pointed her remarks.

It was not long until these two friends like the rest were going into God's out-of-doors to seek a tree for studying the morning Bible lesson. The mornings were busy with Bible and mission study, and the sessions; the afternoons free for rest and various out-door sports, boating, bathing, tennis; the evenings brought short and telling Gospel messages, gave the camp the healthful impetus necessary for the next Association year, and prepared leaders and perplexed girls for large accomplishments in their college centers.

Miss Holman and other secretaries were having constant appointments in various parts of this wooded camp each afternoon. Early in the week Marion had sought an hour with this friend who had opened the way of light to her. The two walked away from the tents and over beyond to a high elevation above the lake and found in the shade a grass-covered, cosy corner.

"Marion, I have not had the opportunity to tell you, as I have longed to do, how much your face shows marks of soul development."

Tears, unannounced and unexpected filled Marion's eyes. "But it isn't clear yet, Ruth," for so she called Miss Holman when alone. "I have just

been waiting to come here to see you in order that I might tell you about it. It is all so uncertain, and yet every day that I have been here has revealed to me that I must do that which will crush the very life out of me." Agony was in every line of her face.

They looked over the blue, restless lake, gracefully curving its borders into the wooded hillsides. Now and then a sail-boat skimmed across their vision, peacefully carried by the wind, without effort, without struggle.

A deep-drawn breath from Marion, and then the words — "Ruth, I'll tell it all to you from the beginning. There isn't another person in this world that would understand. It's an affair of the heart." She stopped. "I suppose girls have been pouring their troubles into your ears all day long. If they are like me, a large part of their motive in coming to Geneva has been to come to you. You are God's own messenger, and we trust you. You and the workers make Geneva." Marion paused again. "I guess it's hard for me to get started. Well, I am engaged to Eugene Whitmore, and have been since my freshman year. He lives in Minneapolis and there isn't a man in that city who fills in more time with good works than he does. He loves the newsboys; is always looking after the friendless stranger; spends time, thought, and money for the happiness of others; and Ruth, he believes in God, but he doesn't believe that Christ

was more than man. You see my trouble?" She brushed away the constantly falling tears and went rapidly on. "You have taught me the vital necessity of belief in Christ, but I can't make Gene see it as you made me see it. He puts me off, says he is sincere and that I am sincere and that's all we can expect of each other. I know it isn't all, and I am unhappy every moment of my life because he does not love Christ. My wretchedness increases, because Christ is coming to be more and more to me, and still each day my love for Gene increases. What am I to do?"

Ruth Holman talked tenderly but firmly to the broken-hearted girl of the growing incompatibility of two people whose essentials in life differed; of the misery that was sure to follow in time; of the teaching of the word of God in the New Testament, and thus the clear will of God for one who was His sincere follower. She drew Marion to her.

"I don't see how I can ever give him up; and he is immovable."

Ruth did not answer, but the quiet did.

"Yes, God's will! I see it clearly. Back there at college, I said I would yield." These words came out slowly after several moments of waiting. "I didn't count the cost." Her face was haggard. "I've been fighting it all summer. I could scarcely wait to come to you. I knew what you would say, and yet, I hoped you would show me another way; but you couldn't."

“O Marion! I never loved you so much as I do now when I look into your future and know that your happiness must depend on the will of God. It is neither logical nor Christian for you, a follower of Christ, to put yourself under marriage bonds that are not entirely consecrated to your Christ. Wedlock must bring upon any woman limitations, and, because she vitally unites her life with that other, unless they are one in their life-purpose, each must yield somewhat and sacrifice to the other's purpose. It is a divided house, each wronging the other. It can never be God's will for you to yield one *iota* of the Christ-purpose in your life. Every day you live must count toward that purpose, not be a compromise of it; and so an outward union with one with whom there is no spiritual union is putting misery into your future.”

Before leaving this secluded nook the two girls bowed heads in prayer concerning this crisis in Marion's life. The greatest comfort of the hour was her friend's pleading to the Father that He might sustain her dear one in this sorrow and strengthen her to do His will; that He might bring to bear the forces that would change that other's heart to know Jesus Christ; and that deep joy and service might be the key-note in Marion's life. As Ruth cried out to God, in petition after petition, on Gene's behalf, it seemed to Marion that she entered into the very heart of her own suffering and that her own sobs were Ruth Holman's sobs.

They walked back along the lake-side, each shut in her own thoughts. As they again came within hearing of voices the one assurance from Ruth was, "I shall pray for you and for him. I know you will keep true to our God, Marion."

"Ruth, I had given up hopes of ever moving him, but your prayers I have not had before. I shall be true to the vision I have had this afternoon."

As Marion neared her tent, she was greeted by her family, all talking at once to tell her that she had been made chairman of college day.

"Who told you? They surely would get a better informed chairman than I am." She was glad that she could drop into the conversation with so little apparent effort, though Elizabeth read in a moment hidden pain in Marion's face. The girl's sympathetic reading was answered by a quick look of appeal which was as promptly taken as given, and Elizabeth continued to direct the trend of thought along college day plans.

"You see," ventured one of the girls, "you got your reputation up by singing, Sunday. I heard Miss Bean, assistant of the conference, asking who you are and where you are from, and all sorts of questions."

"Yes," joined in another, "you are to see her to-night at six-thirty in front of the Hall to talk it over."

“Really, is it true, Hattie Belle?” Marion turned to the first girl.

“Yes, sure!”

“Do give me some ideas, then!” Marion sat down despairingly.

“Why, each state dresses up in tissue paper decorations, and they all have their ‘stunts.’ Don’t you know?” was the surprised response.

“They have a regular procession, Marion, and pass before the review stand of conference leaders and speakers,” chimed in Flo Andersen. “We’ll help you out, for we are so proud that you are in our tent. You are one of the dignitaries, now, you see,” and she laughed merrily.

College day opened with finest prospects of weather. In every neck of the woods were groups of girls, early that morning, practicing their songs and special parts. At two o’clock the procession formed in the rear of the grounds. As it circled around to face the review stand it looked like a series of advancing rainbows. The girls were all dressed in white gowns and wore tissue paper regalias according to their states: there were the yellow sunflower hats from Kansas; the white butterfly bonnets and white pennants with a black I from Iowa; the red miller’s aprons and caps from Minnesota; and the nine or ten other states with their greens and their blues, their purples and their pinks in their various forms of collars, sashes, head-gears. At the close of this line of five hun-

dred girls were the "leavins" from Oklahoma, Texas, Montana, and a few other outskirting states represented by only one or two from each. Their motley delegation of banners was decorated with "leavins" of every description. These babes of the borders, with light blue bonnets and bibs, had their dollies, their rattles, their candies, and even their nurse, for they had persuaded the conference nurse to join them.

The review stand was back from the lake several rods with a splendid stretch of lawn between. The girls divided and took their station on both sides of this grass plot keeping the lake in the background, and the center for the arena of activities. Marion was here and there and everywhere, with a megaphone arranging delegations and bringing order out of the mingled masses. Soon all was ready for the performances to begin.

There suddenly appeared, seemingly out of the lower regions, for nobody saw it arrive — an orchestra over at the right of the audience. Of all the queer attires, these musicians wore the queerest! They were mostly in "gym" suits, with jackets of many hues: red, white, blue, tan, brown, black, and gray. All sorts of bandannas were in evidence, around their necks, to mop their talented brows, or dust their valuable instruments. They had about twenty pieces. Violins made of tennis rackets were very successfully played with pennant sticks as excellent bows to extract heavenly tones. Combs

with paper mountings were plentiful. The kettle-drum was an honored dish-pan, and the same was beaten in good time with a potato masher. A very mellow-toned cornet lent its charm through Marion's megaphone, after she had used it to announce the numbers on the program. The numbers the orchestra offered for public approbation were such new and startling selections as "Yankee Doodle," "The Old Oaken Bucket," "Way Down upon the Suwannee River."

Even "Mendelssohn's Wedding March" was attempted with an eye-appeal to one special secretary in the reviewing stand. The conductor of the orchestra had an unusual advantage in her baton which was a child's parasol, for its color made it most effective in catching the eye of her musicians; but even her baton was eclipsed by her pedestal which was a ladder. This assisted her and her co-laborers in reaching especially high pitches, for at said elevated notes she mounted to the top of her ladder with nimble feet, there to remain till the low tones brought her to the bottom.

This imported orchestra interspersed its melodious wafts at intervals, as the states pausing in their "stunts" gave opportunity.

Again Marion appeared in the center of the cleared area, megaphone in hand, full of the frolic of the hour and beautiful in her animation. Every heart beat for her in the moment's pause she stood before them. She then announced that the after-

noon's program would close with a visit from their foreign secretaries with some of their native workers. The attention of the hearers was called to the lake front as she turned. They saw five row-boats circling about. In the boats were girls with brilliant foreign costumes. They bore the flags of many lands, judging from the variegated colors of the strings of pennants which, on a wire, were suspended over each boat. This wire was curved and fastened at stern and prow. Of course one ought never to allow that the girls' ingenuity had utilized college pennants. The boats anchored, after some pretty maneuvers in the lake, and their distinguished passengers disembarked, coming up to the company where they were duly received, and each secretary was urged to favor the assembly with a speech and to introduce her foreign guests so fascinatingly gowned. There were two contingencies from India, two from China, and one from Japan.

To the amazement of the leaders, the girls had actually found striking likenesses of their representatives, their foreign secretaries. One could almost imagine the real people present in their substitutes.

After this the afternoon was pronounced finished and the circles broke with a renewing of the songs and repeated cheers for their college-day chairman.

One of the memorable results of that day came from the little good night Nebraska delegation meet-

ing when Polly Andrews rose to speak of what she had been receiving. "I just want to tell you girls, the best part of all this college-day arrangement to me has been Marion Mansfield. I wasn't a Christian when I came here. A good many of you know I wasn't; and I guess all the university girls at least, know I came up here for the athletics and a good time. But I just want to tell you right now, I found Christ through Miss Mansfield and that athletic committee. There were fifteen of us on that committee, and we never met once that she didn't begin with prayer and others followed. She prayed that college day would be happy and teach girls the genuine joy with Christ as their leader; and she prayed that the field-meet, that came off yesterday, would be a success and that girls would not sprain their ankles; and I don't know — but she just talked to Christ about every little thing; and I believe that's why everything did succeed, and I want Him to make my life succeed."

She sat down embarrassed but determined. Those who knew this jolly, thoughtless girl, held their breath in wonder though they had been praying for her ever since she had come, yes, before she started to the conference. They realized that she had summoned every bit of courage she had to make that confession, that night, and they were fully aware of the fact that their delegation would return to the university with a host when it went back with Polly Andrews a Christian.

Toward the close of the Geneva days, Elizabeth "got her nerve up" to the point of asking from Ruth Holman what she had been wanting for almost a year now, a personal interview. Upon her request that she might see Miss Holman absolutely alone she was taken over to the Villa to her friend's room. The struggle in that room that day was a life struggle. She made a clean sweep of it telling Miss Holman everything that she had told Marion and still more. Not one item did she withhold. Absolutely she laid bare her soul with its temptations, its surroundings, its battles fought and to be fought.

As she started to leave she held out her hand, taking Miss Holman's in a warm, firm grasp and said. "Marion has made this afternoon possible for me. She has been gently leading me on. She has trusted me, and then I trusted her. I told her a little and then I knew I could tell you more. Your life has been influencing me, guarding me for ten months, gradually crushing the bitterness out. To-day the last remnant has gone. Because of you I have learned to trust people, to love them. My experiences have made me older than the girls about me. Now you understand, and it is the greatest human comfort I have. I know one word you are longing to hear from me above all others — that I know Christ better. I do, my dear, dear friend. You and Marion have taught me."

"Elizabeth, I am deeply grateful that God has

given you to me as He has. Our friendship will ripen and grow firm with the years. Christ is our foundation, our confidence for this. I expect much from you in His service."

Elizabeth's only response was a pressure of the hand, and she left the room, the tears streaming down her face.

Those days at Geneva brought Marion and Elizabeth into a closer friendship than they had ever known. Each had crossed the Rubicon and each knew of the other's victory, though nothing passed between them on the subject. They returned to Minneapolis for three weeks' rest with the family, before going back to Exmoor.

"Elizabeth, I guess it's good that we are going home before college for more reasons than one," Marion had said as they left Geneva. "I don't know how you feel, but it is just as if I had been on a Mount of Transfiguration, and I've got to seek some quiet place where I can find myself, take my bearings, and get ready to put into practice what I've learned. I'm tired."

Elizabeth read much into those last words. She would put her own personal interpretation into them: "Peace after the storm; rest after the hard won battle."

CHAPTER XVI

THE STRUGGLE

The days wore on, after Marion's return from Geneva, and she dragged through them, she scarcely knew how. Opportunity had not been given her to speak with Gene, and the suspense was becoming intolerable. At last it came one evening of the last week before leaving home. The rest of the family had gone to a neighboring lake for an open air concert. Marion had lingered to go over with Gene, who was late in coming. As she was sitting on the porch waiting for him the determination pressed down upon her to have their talk out that night, and as he hurried over the lawn, happy in seeing her there alone, he came upon his sorrow on one of his most unprepared nights. There had been a glow in his heart this day through, at the promise of the evening. His spirits were buoyant. He had a consciously firm grasp upon the future. A chill struck through his heart as Marion spoke to him, there was such a tenseness in her voice.

"Have you been waiting long?" he had asked

cheerily and fondly, hoping to hear her say that it *had* seemed long.

Instead, she said in a low tone, "I don't know; not very, I think; but I have been wishing that we might stay at home to-night and talk. Some things I have wanted so much to say to you, Gene."

"Then let's stay," was his only response. He felt smothered as he spoke. She pushed a chair out for him, and he quietly took it.

After a pause that seemed to him eternal, Marion began abruptly: "I don't know how to say it, Gene, but the last weeks I have been fighting a double battle: for myself and for you, too. I know to-night that I shall never be able to marry you till you can love Jesus Christ as your divine Savior, as God Himself."

"I don't understand your grounds for saying this." His voice was husky.

"For one thing, Gene, I believe that Christ alone can give you and me eternal life, and if you don't accept Him, you and I shall be separated in the life hereafter, which means that God could not let us be together then. If this difference in our belief is enough to separate us in eternity, why ought it not be enough to separate us now?"

"Marion, you know I believe in God but I don't believe He makes Christ the vital entrance to eternal life. I don't believe this will separate us hereafter; and haven't I as much right to believe

I am right as you have to believe that you are right?"

"Yes, Gene, but I have no right to take your belief as my guide in my actions; I must take my own which leads me to the conviction that a God who would not sanction our eternal union would not sanction our temporal union."

"Marion, we cannot agree on everything. We must each have our opinions, our individuality." His tones were all but pleading.

Her voice was broken as she spoke. "I know, Gene, but Christ is not a matter of opinion to me. He is belief, conviction, the one vital part in my life, which is from everlasting to everlasting. Opinions fade, change. He is the 'I am' in my life, Gene. He is man to you; He is God to me. Marriage ought to be a union, a heart union, a spiritual union, and that is not true wedlock which is not such a union. You scorn the false, and so do I. The One I love with every inch of my life, you simply admire; such is not perfect union. The One I worship with every atom of my being you even refuse to know; such is not a spiritual union. If we marry, we can have no common central thought in our home."

"Yes, Marion, — love."

"No, only a temporary human love, but no eternal foundation."

"God is our eternal foundation."

"But that's just it: my God and your God

are not the same, Gene. My God makes Christ, His only begotten Son, the door of eternal life; and your God doesn't. Ours would be a divided house, and as the years rolled, the separation would widen, becoming eventually as wide as our beliefs which are as far removed from each other as man from God, as shown in the recognition we each give Christ. Two lives only temporarily united, and the union even then not a true one; can it be, Gene?" Her voice broke completely; she could go no further.

Eugene Whitmore buried his face in his hands. A groan that he could not suppress was all that Marion heard.

She bent toward him. "I have been fighting it these many months." Her voice was steady again. "I see no other way for me. When I said I would marry you, I did not know what a true marriage was. I didn't understand that it meant the most sacred, soul union. Gene, tell me, could you marry a girl who didn't believe in God?"

"No," was the husky and scarcely audible answer.

"You do not believe in Christ as God, Gene."

"It's different."

"Gene, it would always be different, and we could never understand any easier than we do now, and ours would be a home either wretchedly unhappy, or a home that would witness the constant suppression of the best thing in our life, our rela-

tion to our God, because we could not agree. Wouldn't that mean stagnation instead of growth to us? If it were not a vital thing to me, Gene, if it were only an opinion, — but I can't put the vital down, I can't," she brokenly cried.

Gene could stand it no longer. He got up and paced the length of the veranda several times.

She stopped him. "Gene, I must tell you all to-night, all of it, not only because of myself, but because of my brothers. I dare not marry a man with whom I have not a spiritual union. If either one of them should marry a woman who was not a Christian, she would be no support, and I should know that brother of mine was weakening his Christian life in making his constant life-companion, a companion of fifty years, perhaps, one who could not strengthen him. They are neither one as strong Christians yet as I wish they were; and I should be forced to blame myself, if, by my example, I should encourage them in this sort of choice."

"Marion, do you love me?"

She had risen, and looked away over the lake. "Yes, Gene."

"I will win you back again." All the strength of his manhood was put into that "I will."

She was quite as firm. "There is only one way, Gene. And I have been longing for it with all my heart."

"Would God have put this love into our hearts, if He had not meant that we should marry?"

"I can't speak for you, but for myself. Through this love God has taught me such a surrender to His will, such a realization of the supremacy of His love in my life as I never could have gained by marrying. I know if I were to marry you under present conditions, I would make my love to you and my service to your life supreme, instead of my love to God and my service in God's work."

He almost fell, but caught himself and leaned against a pillar as he trembled from head to foot.

"The light of my life has gone out."

"Gene, Gene, don't suffer so, I beg of you! Don't say that! I shall pray unceasingly for you."

They stood motionless as time pulled them through the hour.

At last Gene spoke in an unnatural tone, "When will your family be home?"

"Before long, I think. The clock just struck half past ten."

"Are you alone?"

"No, Anna is here."

"Then I think I'll go." He reached out his hand to her. "Good bye. I shall leave the city to-morrow morning and shall probably not see you again before you go East."

She took his hand which trembled as it clasped hers. She could not utter a word. Before she knew it, there was a swift change. He had her in his arms so firmly she could scarcely catch her

breath. The burning word, "Sweetheart," pierced her ear, and then he was half way across the lawn. So quickly had it all come and gone that she was dazed, and stood there vacantly staring into space for some moments. After that she threw herself into the hammock and sobbed out the anguish of her heart. She couldn't get hold of herself at all. Her sorrow choked her.

Over and over did she call to her Lord. "My God! Why hast Thou done it? Nothing left. Yes, yes, Christ, my all! Be with me."

Blindly Gene Whitmore took his way home. The thought of Jack Casey crossed his dark and weary path. He was broken and helpless before the suggestion.

Marion fell into a sort of stupor, but was aroused some time after by the approach of voices. Hurrying to her room she escaped the wondering inquiries of her family, and had only her mother's solicitous love to meet for the present. After telling her mother that she was not ill, but that she couldn't talk then, that Gene had been with her all evening, and that she would explain in the morning, she was left to quiet and to seclusion.

Marion thought her heaviest struggle was over when she met Gene. She now found that the heaviest of all lay before her, that of convincing her family that she had taken the right step. Morning ushered a day into her life that she had little strength to master, so far as physical force was

concerned. The previous evening seemed to have sapped the very vitality from her body. In spite of all the cheer she forced into her voice, when she came down to breakfast the worn face would tell the tale, and she felt the oppressive concern in her family's greeting. An exhaustion that held her captive was in her every movement. She knew the household saw it, but she had no power to conceal what they saw.

"Good morning, my dear, we missed you last night," was her father's word to her as he glanced over his paper and then paused, scanning her as the response came.

"Yes, we expected to go, and then we decided to stay. Was the music good?" She tried to brighten up, but felt it had been an utter failure.

"Hello, sis! Why didn't you and Gene come along?" George looked curious.

"Oh, we changed our minds, George." She attempted a laugh thinking, 'Oh, dear! Who next?' "Let's have a game of tennis this morning, brother."

"All right. I haven't had a chance to beat you this week." He took a bombastic swing around the room, boy-fashion.

She stepped out on the side porch for a fresh breath of the morning and a chance to get her balance. To her surprise she stumbled upon Horace who had been standing quietly listening to what

had been going on inside and trying to turn things over in his mind.

"Good morning, Marion. Are you ill?" His voice was sympathetic. That was the last straw. The tears would come.

"Oh, no, dear! I'll be all right soon." She turned away.

The breakfast was an ordeal that was lived through she knew not how, except that she did not disgrace herself.

At the earliest opportunity, Mrs. Mansfield said, "Can you come to my room a little while, Marion?"

Ah! She knew what that meant, but the sooner over the better. She had not realized before how difficult it would be to tell this mother, who had held Eugene Whitmore a model young man, and been most gratified in her daughter's choice.

"Dear, I couldn't stand it another moment. Has something happened between you and Gene? You look as if you had had a six months' illness." She spoke nervously.

"Yes, mother, dear; something very, very serious has happened. I told Gene last night that I could not marry him unless he would accept Christ."

"What did he say?" was the anxious question.

"He can't believe as I do, he says, and he leaves the city this morning."

"Where does he go?"

"I don't know, mother." Her voice was growing less steady as she felt her mother's tones tightening. That the mother who had been her *confidante* from childhood, now in the deepest sorrow of her life failed to understand, made her sick at heart. A struggle was approaching which she did not feel equal to, for which she was not prepared. It flashed through her mind, for the first time, that she ought to have expected this, for the deep Christian experience of the last months had been the only restraint that had ever come between her mother and herself. She had had faith that it would all come out right and had not heretofore realized how this would affect her mother's appreciation of this decision. Really, she had considered this sorrow so entirely her own, and her mind and heart had been so filled with Gene, that it had not occurred to her what part her family would take in the affair.

"My daughter, you have been very unwise."

"I have acted honestly, mother," she pleaded.

"You have been altogether too rash," the mother continued, seeming not to notice Marion's last sentence. "It is really foolish to let a little matter of opinion like this affect your whole life-happiness. You must learn to be broad and charitable, and not expect to conform other people's ideals to your own."

"It isn't my opinion. It is my conviction. I

couldn't be happy with Gene not a follower of Christ, and make a home with him."

"Marion, your father and mother have made a happy home, I think, and your father is not a churchman."

Marion had not a word to say there. The sense of a daughter's relation to her parents, her filial respect, was too strong to allow her to disagree even though she felt a great lack in her own life and saw it in her brothers.

"Marion, this has overwhelmed me. I am deeply disappointed. Something surely must be done. I can't talk more to you, now." She kissed her daughter and turned away in her grief and confusion.

Marion left the room crushed. George and his tennis were rest for her that day. She had told Elizabeth very briefly what had happened between herself and Gene, and also of her mother's attitude toward that happening. She closed her story with, "Don't sympathize too much with me; I can't stand it. Pray for me, I need it. Pray for my family; it's a crisis in their lives as well as in mine, to know the value of Christ."

"I will pray for you, with all my heart and soul, Marion," were Elizabeth's loyal words.

In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield had a long conversation over the affair. It was decided that the father should have a sensible talk with his daughter.

In a few days after thinking over the subject quietly, and feeling that he had been very circum-spect in his judgment, Mr. Mansfield called Marion into his den to settle the matter calmly.

"It has made me very sad, my child, to hear what your mother has had to tell me. Do you not feel, now that you have had time to think, that you ought to reconsider?"

"No, father." She did not falter to-day though cut to the heart. "I have been considering for many months. This is not a sudden decision that I have made."

"I am much grieved, and so is your mother. We have our daughter's future at heart. There is not a finer fellow than Eugene Whitmore in the country. Tell me, Marion, why you have done this." He had expected to take up the defense of Gene from the viewpoint of the home, but he had not expected to see Marion so unyielding.

She paused before she answered him. How could she give it, when she didn't even know that her father was a Christian? How could she give it and not have it a daughter's reproof to a father? How could she give it and make it a plea for her Christ?

"Father, I scarcely know how to express myself. I'll tell you as nearly as I can." Her heart's desire for that father, who had given her every thing in this world a father could give, whom she loved with all the warmth of her affectionate nature,

almost choked the words down some of the time. "This last year I have come to know Jesus Christ as a personal friend. He has helped me to live, to conquer temptation, to love people more unselfishly. He has shown me so much more beauty in life than I ever saw before. He has won the devotion of my heart and soul. The Bible has revealed to me that I should offer Him not only love but worship. I can love people, but I can worship only God. This shows you, father, what Christ is to me. Gene refuses to know Him in this way, and to believe what He says He is, — our Lord and our God, the door to eternal life. Father, do you think I could ever marry anyone who would not love you and believe you are what you say you are?"

"No," was the slow answer.

"I love Christ, even more than I do you, father. He is my God."

"You may be mistaken in Christ, Marion."

"Do you think I am, father?" The words fairly rushed from her. She looked searchingly into her father's eyes.

He evaded her question. "I believe it is not a settled fact. The world differs considerably along this line. So long as there is such disagreement, are you not going too far to make this the deciding point? Many another agrees with Gene. It seems to me that you are unjust in your demands, my dear. You have already given him your word."

All she had said had seemed to be lost. The

burden of being misunderstood was crushing her. She made one more attempt. "I gave him any word, father, but it was a word that implied bringing happiness to him. I could bring him only misery as I am now, for there would be no joy in my heart for him. He could not accept me, nor could you give me to him, if I could not bring with the gift the best love and joy of my life. I could not do so now; it is not there to give. Is not a broken word better than this? So far as the indecision of the world in regard to Christ is concerned, that does not affect my decision. I *know* for myself that Christ is the only begotten Son of God, even though the peoples of the earth should rise up against me. I must act in accord with this conviction."

"We must leave it now, Marion. I hope you will see differently, later." He was kind to her, but she knew her father's keen disappointment in her and it hurt.

The father and mother maintained a silence that was worse to her than words.

Horace said little, but she frequently saw him looking at her as if he were trying to make up his mind whether she were hard-hearted or deserving of pity, either of these judgments being a distress to her. Only once had he referred to it by saying, "It 'stumps me' to know why you would turn down a fellow like Whitmore." He had responded this to her question, "What is it, Horace?" asked out of

sheer embarrassment that when she had caught his glance he did not turn away as usual.

She had replied clearly and simply. He had only said, "I believe you'll change your mind some day." She did not carry the conversation further.

One of Marion's last afternoons, George had asked her to go fishing with him. "Don't you want Elizabeth to go, too?" she suggested.

"No, I guess not, this trip," was his awkward response.

Marion wondered and accepted.

When they got off by themselves, perched on the bank, rods in hand, George began: "Guess there won't be much fishing to-day, Sunny," his own homely and affectionate nick-name for the family sunbeam. "I want to talk, if you don't mind."

He looked up so distressed that Marion could not help answering, "Of course, not." She felt his sympathy, before he spoke.

"Gene is a Jo-dandy fellow all right, and I can't quite see how you could give him the shake; but I just want you to know, sis, I'm on your side. I've been awful sorry for you lately. I've known the folks were against you. You seem so alone." His words came rather helter-skelter as if he didn't know what to do with them, but he continued: "I'll never forget that morning I saw you reading your Bible, and I think it would be lots nicer if two people could read it together. I want to tell you I'll stand by you, no matter what comes." He

wished she wouldn't cry, but he was glad he'd said it. It had been pent up so long, that he felt better now.

Marion utterly unconscious of any tears falling knew but one thing: that this brother had been one of the greatest human comforts she had had since that long, long night.

"Brother, you are my strong support, and I depend on you."

That sentence, "I depend on you," made him feel every inch a man. Marion patiently went over the reasons for doing what she had done. George felt that she trusted him, and was glad to be her champion.

"You still love him, then?" He looked up in surprise.

"Yes, but I love Christ more."

"May be he'll come around, yet, Marion."

The boy's hope almost sent a thrill of courage through her heart. "Pray for him, George."

"That I will, but you see I don't know how very well. I'll do anything I can for him, for you, though. May be we'd better go back. Guess they'll think we're not very good fishermen, but I don't care." He got up and started on a long chase of whistling songs.

Only Marion knew how much this afternoon with George helped her to live the happy Mary in her home those last hours.

CHAPTER XVII

JOHN BURROUGHS

Marion threw herself into college life with all her strength. Never had she seemed to possess such capacity for work. Every moment was counting either for the instructors or for the girls about her. Elizabeth saw the wear of Marion's determined vivacity, but she knew that for the present, at least, it was better to let the physical be forgotten in the care of the mental and the spiritual. One after another marked the stimulus that Marion was to those with whom she came in contact.

A month was as long as Elizabeth could stand this without interfering. A change, a break, must come. Marion was not made of iron. Anything to bring her to forget her responsibilities for a day seemed necessary. As these thoughts were passing through Elizabeth's mind, she was straying across the campus when suddenly she was hailed by Miss Bows, a merry little woman in the Latin department. She was a friend of the out-doors, and one could most frequently find her, in her leisure

hours, out with the birds, studying the trees, or playing golf as she was now doing. The girls loved her and loved to take Saturday tramps with her.

"Just the thing," thought Elizabeth, as she came up with Miss Bows.

"Too sober, my dear. This is a bright happy day, haven't you observed?"

"I surely have, Miss Bows, and there is nothing that I should like better than a good tramp 'way off with you."

"Well, sir," responded the uncereemonious little Miss Bows, as she gave her golf-stick a swing over her shoulder, "do you know that's just what I've been thinking! That's why I called you over. How would you like a trip up to Slab-sides? Mr. Burroughs has invited me to bring a company of girls any time I would drop him a note for a Saturday."

"Oh, that would be great, Miss Bows!"

"We could have about eight in the party. We'd take up a cake for him;" she laughed, "I know what kind — and some other trifles to eat, and we'd make a day of it."

"That would be too good for words. My! I'm glad you happened to see me looking sober." There was a twinkle in Elizabeth's eye.

"Well, you ask the girls, and we'll go."

"Whom shall I ask?"

"Oh, I don't care! Marion of course. I think

it might cheer up Amy Morrison. Florence Warren would be jolly."

"That's right! 'Little' Warren would be just the person for that kind of trip."

"Anybody else you want to."

"That means three more, doesn't it?" continued Elizabeth. How would Clara Louise, Geraldine and Isabel do?"

"That's good — first rate. You see the girls, and I'll arrange about the provisions."

Elizabeth struck out on her errand immediately, thoroughly content with what was in store for Marion's relief. "Couldn't be better," she said aloud.

"I have an appointment for you Saturday," she said as she met Marion shortly after.

"All right. I'm ready for it. Hope it's seasoned with fun."

"Why, Marion, Marion, you look as if you were ready for the larkiest kind of lark."

"That I am."

"Well, you can't get your expectations too high to approach what I have in reserve for you."

"You're no tease, are you?"

"The twinkle in your eye keeps leading me on, Marion," laughed Elizabeth. "I'll tell you, though; Miss Bows has asked seven of us to go with her Saturday to spend the day with John Burroughs. Now what do you think of that?"

"I think it is just g-r-a-n-d," rolled out Mar-

ion. "I've been wanting to go there for two solid years; and you say I am included?"

"Of course you are; the first one she spoke of."

"I'll be traveling around in the clouds the rest of this week."

"Not alone, my Mary," nodded Elizabeth.

"A jolly crowd," commented Marion as Elizabeth named over the favored company.

Elizabeth could see almost from the very instant she told Marion of the outing, that through the following days of anticipation the strain of life was slipping its grasp. Every time they were together a new plan for Saturday developed.

If Mr. Burroughs could have known the joy he was putting into the hearts of those college girls by granting them a few hours with him at Slab-sides, and if he could have realized how that day would stay with them long years after, as one of the deepest inhalations Mother Nature ever allowed them to take from her bounty, because of his gentle guidance into her storehouse, it would have been a matter of gratitude to those who had received his hospitality.

Those days of waiting before the great day were lengthening unspeakably. Finally the pent up spirits of the girls were released. Saturday morning had actually arrived, and they were on the little boat skimming along the Hudson. Songs and laughter and happy faces gave promise of the

day. Every girl bore a kodak exultingly under her arm. What a prospect for Mr. Burroughs!

"I can scarcely wait to see the man who wrote 'Fresh Fields'—to see him in flesh and blood." This was Isabel.

"You'll find him just as sunny and refreshing as his works," assured Miss Bows.

"Yes, and to see him where he belongs, out in the entangled woods, near waterfalls, with the birds and fruits of the Highlands. It's a long hoped for privilege, Miss Bows," contributed Marion.

"Give us some of your out-door songs to prepare us for our day, Marion," Miss Bows requested.

With customary responsiveness Marion gave several flower songs and then an April ditty. "How do you like April with an October background?" she laughingly inquired. "Do you remember how splendidly Mr. Burroughs describes this month of uncertainty? It is in 'Birds and Poets, with other Papers.' He speaks of the longing and sadness one finds in the spring akin to the autumn note, and then he says, 'Hope for a moment assumes the attitude of memory and stands with reverted look.' I can see the face of springtime looking back into the bleak, cold winter. Then, too, other sentences I remember; they are so true: 'In spring every thing has such a margin! There are such spaces of silence! The influences are at work under

ground.' I wonder what he'll teach us to-day about fall?"

"Marion, do you remember in that same book his description of birds?" asked Amy Morrison. "He calls them 'beautiful vagabonds, masters of every clime and knowing no bounds.'"

"Yes, I recall it. He speaks, too, of their 'holiday lives.' I like that for the dear little air spirits."

Thus the phrasing of past delights in reading went on. Marion was supremely happy in the world that she loved, and Elizabeth's joy was in her friend as she saw her relax.

Later as they arrived at the wayside station, Miss Bows marshaled her walking party for a tramp of something like a mile and a half back into the Highlands. The quiet country road led gently up and over the hills. The farther they went the more secluded the road.

"Where ever are we winding to, Miss Bows?" called out Marion.

"On to the most charming little nest you can imagine, Marion. Isn't the woodsy smell delicious, this morning?"

Farther and still farther, scattering the rolling stones, they trudged, scaring the scolding chipmunks as they scuttled through the brush or lingered by the path.

"O Miss Bows! I know I heard a rattlesnake," and "Little" Warren came bounding back to the

road. Upon this all the company hastened their steps except Geraldine, who stopped, leaned against a tree and laughed until it was feared that the fright had overcome her. One or two came back to hurry her on. By this time she had gained enough composure to speak.

"Do all come back and see 'Little' Warren's rattlesnake!" she called almost hysterically.

They ventured a retreat and Geraldine pointed out two saucy chipmunks at a safe distance, putting in an exasperated plea against intruders. In fact they waxed quite eloquent as their audience stopped to watch them, and, to their own distress, refused to move on.

"Better come out in the country near Pottsville and spend a vacation with me, 'Little' Warren," was Geraldine's suggestion.

"Little" Warren stood her ground well, when she found herself the center of these jubilant explorers, and made no excuse for past deeds.

"Girls, we're almost there!" was "Little" Warren's warning in an undertone. "Hunt up your most attractive smile. Really I'm scared. Never saw a live author before in all my days."

"You were frightened once before, to-day, because it was your first experience, weren't you?" laughed Isabel.

"Now, Isabel!" and "Little" Warren struck off in a whistle which she soon stopped, for they were coming around a bend in the road, and in

full view of two interesting cabins, within a stone's throw of each other. The vines were lending their greens and their graces to the cabins which wore the rustic garb of the Highlands that held them in friendly embrace. The touch of human hands was there in the garden patch, at one side, where were potatoes, celery, onions, etc. Except for this bit of cultivated ground Nature was reveling in her graceful carelessness, roaming where she would. What might one call this little panorama of rustic elegance shut in from the outside gazers by the flanking hillsides?

"Here is Mr. Burroughs's laboratory." Miss Bows turned to Marion.

"How quiet and peaceful! I don't wonder he can write here and study moods in nature."

"Yes, but wait, Marion; this is only a glimpse. You haven't begun to see the hidden treasure, the varied phases. Mr. Burroughs is king of his domain, and he knows his kingdom thoroughly."

Their conversation was arrested by the appearance of Mr. Burroughs on the porch of the first cabin.

"Say, he looks like my childhood's Santa Claus," was "Little" Warren's whispered remark. "Just exactly."

Nodding to Miss Bows and waving his hat to the girls he came forward to greet them. They were quietly happy in observing his every movement, while he, unconscious of their centered inter-

est, moved among them bent upon one purpose — to make them feel at home.

They went with him to his cabin and were introduced to one of the most charming little abodes. There was the large living room with the spacious stone fireplace, every bit of which Mr. Burroughs assured the girls he himself had made, even to the laying of every stone in the chimney which climbed up the outside wall. This room served for kitchen, dining-room, sitting-room, den, and was decorated accordingly. The walls held many a fascinating freak of nature which Mr. Burroughs had plundered from the hillsides, as well as curious works of art in wood-carving. This living room as rustic inside as it was outside, opened into a small room where a bunk built into the wall furnished an inviting nook for slumber. A stairway also led from the main room into the loft where the walls held beds similar to the one below. The simplicity of these compartments reflected, indeed, accurately, the character of the man whose house it was. The same unconventional freedom which lurks in his writings was in every nook and corner of his cabin, and to the girls' delight he filled in their day quite as characteristically.

With joy in his products, Mr. Burroughs ushered them out to his garden. "There we have potatoes, and here some fine celery. You see my onions?" So he enumerated his yield.

"I think we'll just go into this potato patch and dig some potatoes for dinner. And would you like them roasted in the ashes?" He looked up pleased with his planning.

The girls affirmed that nothing could be better.

"You see, I use my fireplace for all my cooking," he went on, as he bent over a hill of potatoes.

The girls gathered about him in eagerness to share every thing he did, and picked up the great tubers as he threw them out of the earth.

"Little" Warren couldn't stand it any longer. Out came her kodak, and snap it went just as Mr. Burroughs was reaching for another pull. He looked up and laughed. This was all the encouragement the girls needed, and from that hour on, their newly found friend never knew when he was to be called to account on the films of half a dozen kodaks. He was never too much engaged to stop for a picture, never so self-conscious as to refuse an extra snap, always glad to comply with the demands of the most particular artist as she caught his varied poses. His one thought was the pleasure of his guests.

"Some roasted onions might give flavor, too," he suggested as he made way to the onion patch.

The laden girls turned back to the cabin as Mr. Burroughs brought in his contribution of onions.

"We'll put them into the hot ashes and then

we'll go up to Julian's Rock. Splendid view, there!"

Miss Bows had been the leader in the conversation with Mr. Burroughs, but his ease and self-forgetfulness gradually won the girls to sallies of their own. They forgot the reputation, in the man.

"Mr. Burroughs, let Miss Field and me prepare the potatoes; will you?" asked Marion.

"All right! You're pretty good cooks, are you?" was the cheery inquiry.

Isabel and one of the other girls took the onions, while Mr. Burroughs fell back to speak to Miss Bows of some late studies he had been working on; but he didn't lose sight of the girls and their occupation, for when the vegetables were ready he was forward in a moment to take charge.

"This is my *forte*; I know just how," and as he bent forward to lay the onions and potatoes away for appetizing future reference, one might have thought him a boy showing all the alacrity and eagerness of first experiences.

Again they were in the out-of-doors on their way to Julian's Rock.

Mr. Burroughs turned to Florence. "It affords a magnificent view of the Hudson and the country about. You know that my boy, Julian, was the first one to discover this rock after I came up here. He climbed up to its peak first, and so we named it for him."

"That's interesting. I'm eager to see it. Do you spend much time up here, Mr. Burroughs?"

"Oh, yes, a good deal. I often come up here and spend the night. I do a good deal of my writing here, too. It is quiet. I can think, and have uninterrupted intercourse with Nature. Just a good brisk walk from my house down on the Hudson, you know."

On they toiled, catching at the branches here and there to pull themselves up, till at last they reached the little table-rock that had within its possession the promised view of an exquisite picture. The artist hand had painted with broad strokes. In the distance were the flanking ridges with their ever fascinating tranquillity, carving their irregular profile into the horizon. In front the Hudson, a mere silver thread, was offering its changing graces. Then, in the immediate vicinity, sunk low down in the dense green, was the pretty little nest, they had so recently left, the two neighborly cabins, mere doll houses cosily settled in the comfort of the feathery verdure.

Marion and Elizabeth were standing together looking into the bit of rural setting. "What delightful exclusiveness there is, down there, Elizabeth!"

"Yes, and the primitive life here must be a poem. I was just thinking of the potatoes cooking on the hearth, while we rest on the mountain, presently to descend to our midday meal. All we need,

Marion, is Mr. Burroughs's Chloe to low her noon day contentment, — down yonder at the left, I think, would be the artistic spot, — and stretch her shaggy neck out to whisk a sweet-scented cabbage or other plebian delicacy."

"My house-keeping instinct is calling me back to our fireside," Mr. Burroughs eventually remarked.

"Yes, Mr. Burroughs, if you are as successful in satisfying our physical appetites as you have been in meeting our artistic tastes, I am thinking we have before us prospects for an exceedingly enjoyable hour." This from "Little" Warren by way of appreciation.

"We'll see," answered Mr. Burroughs with his genial smile.

What a delicate brown odor filled the room as they came in!

"My, how good!" was the repeated ejaculation, punctuated with many an expressive grunt, as they sniffed the air and drew near the base of activities.

While the girls were preparing the spread, Mr. Burroughs appeared with a basket full of grapes. "Some of my own cultivation, six or eight varieties; I brought them up from the home this morning."

"Luscious, is the only adjective that can describe this fruit, Mr. Burroughs," remarked Elizabeth as she sampled a variety.

"I'll take you down to my arbor this afternoon," was his undertone pledge as he proceeded

to one side of the room to produce from some unperceived nook a supply of mutton-chops.

"Now I'll show you what good bachelor's quarters I can keep," and quite in his element, he prepared coals and laid the chops on to broil. Who could describe the sizzling anticipation which that meat held out to those hungry climbers! It seemed almost human in its tempting deliberateness! At last the chief cook pronounced it, "Done to a turn!" and began his generous helpings from the hearth.

"We men simplify our housekeeping as much as possible," he explained as he saw the girls give very practical approval of his bounty.

"Cooking utensils are not at all conducive to the artistic sense in this neck of the woods, especially when they have to be washed," assured Miss Bows, as she seated herself on the stairway beside the basket of grapes. She said it with such a settled air and shook her head so conclusively that all had to laugh, while more than one wondered how much this child of the out-doors knew of in-door perplexities. None would have ventured a high wager on her.

What a dinner that was! So little drudgery, so much pleasure! Good? Nothing ever tasted so good! All that is needed to make palatable a meal off paper plates is a brisk walk before taking.

"I say this is an ideal dinner, Isabel. Not a dish to wash, nothing but sweet savors for a mem-

ory to add to our sense of expansion, and then, out here on the porch, where we are to live and enjoy! On the aside, I tell you no wonder he can write with such glorious freedom, if this is the way he lives, — nothing more to encumber him than to-day suggests.”

Isabel laughed. “But a reckoning day comes to the best of house-keepers.”

The two girls drifted back into the general conversation just as Mr. Burroughs was saying, “These are my Alaskan boots.” It was a pretty group that drew about him to hear of his experiences in Alaska. Thus they whiled away an hour. Following, Mr. Burroughs took them to visit the merriest little waterfall, resting back in its bower and singing its dainty melody. Through a quiet, woody path he led. Marion chanced to be at his side. She was astonished at the hundred voices of Nature to which he was sensitive, while to all else than his instruction she was deaf, dumb, and blind.

“O to learn at his feet, to know my unrecognized friends that crowd upon my life each day!” her hungry heart cried, as it yearned for treasures of the sunshine.

“There, there, brown thrush, I see you nervously taking your observations,” was Mr. Burroughs’s pleased salutation.

“Where?” came Marion’s eager inquiry.

Mr. Burroughs stopped to point out the timid bird, glad to have a responsive companion.

"Listen! a cardinal bird! I think he is just beyond us." Again he stepped to one side to locate his wayside friend.

"I have him! See?" and Marion following his finger saw the brilliant fellow. "Brown thrush and cardinal are tarrying late this year and I am glad. They are good comrades."

With fulness of joy she entered into his every observation. "There's the winter-green at your right," and stooping he gathered a handful of the bright berries that had escaped her notice.

"Mr. Burroughs, may I ask you a question?" she ventured as she held her hand for the pretty berries.

"Certainly, certainly!"

"How is it that you can look up above you and down below you, and hear all around you at one and the same time?" Marion looked really troubled as she put this question, and Mr. Burroughs broke out into a hearty laugh that said, "Oh, your perplexity is not a grave one!" And his words of encouragement were, "You are one of our strangers. Live out in the open air a while, and you'll soon become accustomed to our many whispered secrets. Frequent Nature's haunts and observe. You will find her very communicative. She's generous not exclusive in her company. Her only requirement is your devotion. She yields to your advances very readily."

"I wish I could live near you, and be intro-

duced into your methods of observation. I love the spring flowers, the pensive violet, and the affectionate hepatica. I have several friends of the woods but they are old timers; and I don't seem to gain new ones. My knowledge of birds is very limited; and I never saw the beauty of the cow until you pointed it out to me. So much has to be told me!"

"Don't despair! Love is the key to keen observation, and you have the love. It will lead you into unknown fields, if you but give it the opportunity, the freedom."

"Oh, how delightfully unexpected!" And Elizabeth's surprised ejaculation pointed their shifting attention toward the desired goal. They were nearing the waterfall. Quickening their steps they were almost immediately by its side. Some stood silently watching; others dipped their hands into its cooling waters, which broke from the obstruction and went babbling over the pebbles of the brook that found its way on through the grove feeding with contentment upon the gift of its Provider.

Marion had thrust herself down on the bank, contemplating closely the fall of the water. She was separated from the others and thus she talked: "What an intimate creature you are, tumbling your life out almost within my grasp. Would you confide in me why you throw your life away with such a lavish hand? You are the first waterfall I

ever had courage to ask, for waterfalls are so far off and high up. I can get near to you. Your touch is personal. That must be because you belong to Mr. Burroughs. Everything about him has a personal touch; he has won you all into intimacy, hasn't he? He really sees what you are and acquaints himself with your habits. I suppose he can coax you to speak even when Jack Frost nips you into your crusty moods. You've not thrown your life away, do I hear you say? You're pouring it into another? Oh, the brook! I see. And then it goes on and peddles it out to the neighboring vegetation. The more you give the more you seem to have. Yes, that's it. One life depends upon another."

"Say, Mary!" Startled, Marion looked up into "Little" Warren's face. "Everywhere I go here I want to say '*Sehr nett!*' Did you ever see its equal?"

"No, I've been thinking that Nature seems to be in a frolic all about this region."

"That's it, Marion! Now you have struck center. That's what I meant, only I didn't see how to put it."

"Come, girls!" Miss Bows called out. "We are going with Mr. Burroughs to his home on the river, then to the station for home."

"What an afternoon! It has just vanished," was Marion's remark to "Little" Warren as they quickened their pace.

"I should say! I never dreamt of its being time to go back. I'm not half through."

Refreshed spirits though weary feet covered the mile and a half or so to the Hudson's border and the home of their host. The cool shaded lawn with the magnificent beauty of the river at its command was a haven to the travelers. They dropped down into its comfort and were further refreshed by the sweet, juicy fruit of seven particular varieties from Mr. Burroughs's arbor. He had a right to be proud of those grapes: the purples, the reds, the whites, the greens.

"Can you love things to grow for you as well as to talk to you?" Marion glanced at her teacher of the afternoon, as she took a second helping.

"I think you can. You're an apt pupil."

"I never ate such grapes! They hinted at the answer even before you spoke it; but I wanted to be sure." The pleasure in Marion's face was reflected in his own.

Down nearer the river's embankment on Mr. Burroughs's grounds was a rustic summer house. Its view was a noble endowment. What fresh soul contributions must have been wafted into the heart of its occupant! It was not the frolic of nature here, but the strokes of strength, steadiness and grandeur. One could imagine some of the inspiration this little spot meant in the life of the author as he told his company that he often shut himself in there while he was writing.

It was a regretted time when the adieus had to be said, but the hour arrived with its unwelcome messages. The girls closed a day rich in its gifts, a day with John Burroughs. Only one who has lived such a day can know its meaning. The veil of nature is drawn aside. One forgets the superficial and looks into the heart life; pushes aside the artificial and finds the satisfaction of the natural; lays off the world's pressure and rests in the calm ease of the out-of-doors. It is a day that liberates one from the imprisonment of the conventional bonds that threaten one's individuality, and gives nourishment for the large, generous impulses, the broad out-look, the throb of higher life when one is all but choked down to the narrowed groove, with horizon limited by the daily annoyances and small interests that send out their feelers, tantalizingly wrapping themselves about one's being. It is a day to cause one to square the shoulders, take a deep breath and live.

CHAPTER XVIII

JUNIOR DOUBTS

Clara Louise was turning down the road back of Main, that cold, lonely November day when she was hailed by a quick, brief whistle. She turned to see "Little" Warren hurrying to her. "Want some company, don't you, Clara Louise?"

"That I do. I was just making up my mind that I would have to take exercise alone. Everybody I struck had to go some other hour, or was too busy. Didn't want to go alone, either. This is a day when a body likes to be near some one else."

"I should say! — get close and confidential! November carries the prophecies of winter all right. Do you know, I don't get homesick once in a hundred years, but I declare! To-day I wouldn't need half try."

"That's the sort of feeling that keeps nagging at me every turn. I was quite disgusted, and that's the reason I thought I'd find the open air

before I got worse. I feel better now that I have company."

"Perversity of human nature! You always want the next fellow as bad off as you are. I'm growing quite cheerful, myself, since this interchange of confidences. You're the first one I've told." "Little" Warren tossed a tennis ball into the air.

"You, too?" questioned Clara Louise.

"We might take a canvass to see how many recruits we could procure. Thought I'd play tennis, but like this better."

Even the rustle of the leaves sounded mournful, as the two crunched along under the trees through the glen. A few lonely chirps from a bird caught up the minor strain. The trickling water moved over its cold, rocky bed carrying in its ripples a hollow foreboding. The atmosphere streaked with gray and purple was enveloping life in every direction. Here and there a squirrel was putting away industriously his winter store in the depths of a friendly tree.

"What a relief that squirrel is! Everything else seems to be waiting, waiting!" "Little" Warren broke the silence that had continued for several minutes while the girls were aimlessly following the path.

"Nature is waiting for the dead sleep of winter to creep up over it and possess its being, I guess."

"Whew! how melancholy! Let's talk about

the most interesting, warmest, happiest something there is."

"And what shall it be?" asked Clara Louise.

"Little" Warren cast her eyes about seeking for an inspiration. "Don't find anything in these regions." She hesitated: "I believe Marion would do first rate. I've been tremendously interested in her lately. Hasn't she developed, though?"

"Yes, she has grown from a girl into a woman this last year."

"We used to think her popular, — that she couldn't be more so; but how her influence has widened!"

"There you have the difference, 'Little' Warren — influence and popularity. I don't believe there is a girl in college that knows more freshmen. It is wonderful to me the way she keeps up her freshmen Bible class. Its average attendance almost equals its enrollment."

"How many has she?"

"Twenty."

"That's the test, to keep girls rounded up in a Bible class!"

"And they all love her."

"Why, Clara Louise! Of course they do. There are depths to her nowadays. Have you noticed it?"

"Yes, I have. I believe she'd understand a sorrow better than she would have done a year ago. I guess it is because she had such a time

with us all. I never would have thought I could be so mean."

"You people were cutting in your remarks! I never could have kept my temper as she did hers."

"Nor could any body else. Marion has told me more than once of how your standing up for her so frankly encouraged her."

"Nonsense! I didn't do anything." "Little" Warren looked bothered.

"Yes, you did; you weren't afraid to speak to Miss Holman at that basket-ball game right before everybody."

"H-m! who would be? She's mighty nice. But Marion has gained so much in such a short time. She'll be president of the Association, next year; see if she isn't. Everybody depends on her, bless her! Even we depend on her to drive away our November spirits. I feel lots better; don't you?"

"Haven't a trace of the blues left!"

How differently two girls took that same November, winter's precursor, as they went for exercise an hour later.

"Elizabeth, this day has been the best companion I've had for weeks — a sort of bosom friend to me."

"Why, Marion?"

"It meets me at every corner and sympathizes."

"I wish I could help you."

It was the first time Elizabeth had mentioned Marion's sorrow since their return to college.

"It isn't that, dear." Marion looked up at Elizabeth. "That has been laid quietly away and rests undisturbed; but I'd like to put out my arms and embrace this day. Its heart-beat would be my heart-beat. It is thoughtful, deliberate, and throbs with depths that we do not fathom. I crave its possessions. There is a curbed passion in November. Its subdued moaning, now and then, brings a message. Do you recognize it?"

"Yes, any one who has suffered understands a November day and is drawn to it. That's why I asked you to come out here alone with me along this country road."

They walked on and on. It was a friendship that could communicate without words.

Somewhat the same thought that had been with Clara Louise and "Little" Warren was in Elizabeth's mind except that she saw more deeply and was puzzled. True, Marion had come into womanhood. She was more than the laughing Mary, this year. There was, perhaps, no girl in college who worked personally among such a large number of girls. Elizabeth saw in Marion a growing power. She saw her increasing in service but there was an under-current, an unsatisfied strain. She was sure it was there. She had known Marion intimately for the last six months and the slightest change in her friend registered itself in her own heart. People

talked to her of Marion and Marion's influence, of the girl's happy way of managing others, and of her vivacity. Still Elizabeth was not satisfied. She believed Eugene Whitmore was the cause of it. For the first time this afternoon Marion had given the smallest expression to the undercurrent that Elizabeth had detected. Yet Marion had said it was not the one thing that Elizabeth had imagined.

"Marion, your life is crowded full of girls."

"What made you say that?"

"Nothing in particular. I was just drifting along your life and thinking of the many you know, and of the many who come to talk their troubles over with you."

"It's not so strange, Elizabeth, when love is at the heart of things; I wish you were not quite so reserved."

"So do I; and I am not going to be. I have been learning much from you. You love Christ devoutly, and you love girls freely and lose sight of yourself completely. I think of myself too much, and am constantly wondering how to begin to do otherwise."

While Elizabeth was speaking Marion's lips tightened a trifle and she looked away over the brown fields.

"Do you remember, Elizabeth, this is the place where we learned friendship from the lily and the fern?"

"I shall never forget it." Elizabeth had no-

ticed what she had seen before, — that Marion did not care to speak much of her own individual Christian work, but she attributed this reluctance to the girl's one supreme quality of always turning every vestige of conversation away from herself.

Upon Marion's return, she found Clara Louise working cheerily and as vigorously as a cosy-corner couch and a nest of sofa-pillows would allow, but ready to be interrupted at the least provocation.

"Hope you had as dandy a walk as we did, Marion. 'Little' Warren and I went up through the glen and beyond. Guess what our inspiration was?"

"Haven't an idea. Your enthusiasm warrants a good one."

"Course! It was you. You ought to have heard 'Little' Warren talk about you; how grand you are, how you've grown, and what you're doing among the girls; and of course I 'dittoed' it all. What do you look so distressed about? It's so!"

"No, I don't think it is. It's peculiar to see the way people get notions into their heads."

"It's no notion."

"What a loyal little room-mate you are! I'm not a third so strong as they say, nor am I half what I ought to be."

"How odd you are!"

Marion laughingly changed the subject, but her heart was heavy.

Presently Clara Louise went over to the library, and Marion was alone. "I feel like a hypocrite. Yes, I might as well say it aloud," was her thought. "Here I am teaching a Bible Class, on the cabinet, deep in Association work, and my heart is not in it. I believe Elizabeth almost guessed my misery, but I did not have the courage to confess; she'd be so grieved and surprised. What am I coming to? I am heartily ashamed of myself though I can't help those miserable, persistent doubts. My faith tries to push them aside, and here they come back at the most unexpected moments. I wish Clara Louise and the rest of them didn't expect so much of me." She stood looking out the window. "How I want to know some things! If Ruth Holman were only here! I wouldn't be afraid to tell my weakness to her. Oh, dear! It seems to me I could never go to another Bible class. The idea of *my* teaching what I don't know myself. I think I understand Gene's position better now. O to have my old time trust! my belief! I know Ruth is right and I am wrong. Nevertheless, I need some things answered. This year has stirred up questions that I never knew could exist for me. What would I ever do, if some girl should come to talk to me about them, because she thought I had them all settled? When she found that I hadn't, and saw me in all this Christian work she would hate me for insincerity."

She threw herself on the couch and buried her

face in the pillows. Shortly she sat up again with a determined spirit. "Embryo! embryo! I'm sick of the word. Evolution! physical evolution! and where's my soul? Like all the rest of the animals, Garden of Eden, and heaven and all — where? An embryo, I suppose. And Christ? Oh, the Christ I have loved and worshipped, given the dearest price of my life for — Can it be He is just a man? — a man with nothing unique about Him, except in degree of difference, an historical character to be interpreted by each age differently, according as they see His national inheritance and limitations? I don't understand God, if He is. A God of love! But why so cruel? If He is all powerful, why does He have to take his Son to satisfy His justice and thus sacrifice His Love? Can the highest love be unjust? And the Bible, anyway? If I were only sure it was all true; but they talk of the myths of the peoples intermingled with it. Morals of the Old Testament set up a strange standard. How much sacredness is there about a book that was compiled as the Bible was, hundreds of years after it was written. Oh, dear! I am so tired!"

She fell back among the pillows. "Will it ever come out right? It must! The girls last year said they got straight before they were through; but, then, I thought them foolish to be mixed; I thought I was above such a calamity. I thought their troubles superficial. They did talk lightly of them,

it seems to me. Don't believe it meant so much to them as it does to me. I wonder if it will take more to settle me than it took to settle them. It's obvious Gene never did get back after his college doubts; at least I have never felt convinced that he agreed with my way of looking at things. Well, I feel better. I've talked it out to myself, although I'm a poor counselor for myself."

Uncertainty eats at one's very soul. It is a parasite that takes the life blood, that fastens itself upon every action, that clings to every decision, that stifles every breath, that forces depression unless its antidote, trust, can be possessed. If the source of trust is turned into the source of uncertainty, there is no rest. Marion stumbled on, waiting for the light, clinging to the past, hoping for the future. The God who previously had been her dependence at unsettled times, was afar off. Her former trust had in very truth become her uncertainty. Her stimulus was people, her faith was people, during these darkened days. People expected much of her, and her constant good was to live up to their demands, at least in appearance. Was it deception? She knew not, but she dared do nothing less. The buoy that kept her from sinking was their hope in her. Could it be that she was passing through her wilderness, and they were the good angels that ministered unto her? Faith was inspired by the life of Ruth Holman. It could not be that

she was living a deception. Ruth Holman's sincerity, penetrating and keen as it was, could not easily be tripped.

Days came when she thought she was back again on the old footing. More often, when teaching her Bible class, the inspiration would come and shut her away absolutely from the questioning that haunted; but afterwards how soon it would swoop down upon her and the reality of the past hour vanish. It was these flashes of light, intermittently cast upon her, that made her feel that she was not altogether sincere. She noticed, too, that when she was with some who were of an opposite nature that the trouble took to its hiding place, but ever and anon it would reappear and abide with her for days.

She dwelt in fear of being asked that which would wring from her a confession and heap upon her humiliation and misunderstanding. To avoid such a calamity, she now and then even shunned the girls. It seemed to her that the Bible class had taken on her own life coloring of indecision — that it was drifting. This almost broke her heart as she thought how she had looked forward to her first Bible class, and had counted on what it would mean for Christ. Some said she was a help, and that the class was strong. She marveled at their blindness. Others told of the life she put into Association work; and she was perplexed over their stupidity as well as over her own ability to keep up.

The loneliness of her life was growing unbearable. Somebody must share it with her. Sometimes she felt a peculiar kinship with Gene in these hours of doubt. "Am I a coward?" she asked in her prayer that night. What queer prayers they were those days!

The following morning, Marion was out early. A resolution had formed. Her face was calm, decided. Clara Louise was asleep when she slipped over to the door to close it softly. She lighted the gas and felt queer and chilly this dark wintry morning. It was a matter of life or death to her. As she sat down to her desk her hand trembled. The confined, turbulent waters were about to break. For a time she stared into the changing shadows. The temptation was on: "Shall it be to Ruth or to Gene?" The gruesomeness of the impenetrable darkness, just before day break, crept more completely over her, clutched her. She could stand it no longer. In desperation she took the green shade from the light, an act which immediately sent a glare forth to penetrate every cranny of the room. "That's better!" She took a deep, full breath. "Now I can think!"

She plied herself to her writing. Quickly written, quickly sealed, the letter waited her disposal. She sat back in her chair to rest, to look at nothing, it seemed, for she saw nothing. She was mentally and physically benumbed from the chill that crept over her. The morning gong startled her. Soon she

knew people would be astir. Clara Louise would be up, and Marion was not ready to see anyone yet. With a sense of relief that it was over, and that she had nothing to do for the next several days but to wait results, she picked up the letter she had written, hurried into her sweater, and was down the hall to post it, almost before the gong had stopped.

Out into the crisp November air she went wandering over the hills to the east where she could see the advance message which the sun was sending across the skies, as its first light made varied pathways through the darkness and then gradually melted into one glow of quiet promise. The girl wandered on, lifting her uncovered head as if she were seeking what was above and beyond. The golden strands of the sun brought out the lights of her gently tossing hair. A little bird now and then cocked its head to look at her or to give a side glance at its early visitor. The softening of the morning's coloring found harmony as it glided from the hair down over the upturned face and enveloped the creamy sweater and the grey skirt of this solitary figure. The quiet, steady peace of the sun, — the same even light it had shed over hundreds of generations brought composure to her heart. Slowly she turned and went back.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TENSION LOOSENED

For weeks, Marion had been anticipating the holiday season with Virginia. To get away from the surroundings that constantly reminded her of her troubles would be a relief; besides she longed once more for her Virginia who had been so largely associated with the thoughtless light-hearted days that were past. Seeing her friend again, she had fancied, would bring back some of the old buoyancy and rest.

“With Virginia and Jack Casey there, I’d sing it all away, yes, I would,” she had said to herself, pressing her lips together and emphatically pushing a roll of music down into her trunk the day before her departure. She sat back for a moment, running over the prospects for the next two weeks. “Wonder how I’ll find Virgie? Will she be changed? Come to think about it, her letters haven’t told me much of herself. She has been tantalizingly impersonal, if I’d only had time to notice it. Well, I surely have been unobservant! She

has been telling me a lot of things she has been doing, but not one thing she has been thinking; and I haven't done much better; have I? But then she was queer last June, and I haven't seemed to get started again with her. But I know this vacation will set things all right, and I'm glad." She resumed her packing.

Virginia, too, was running over the past months, as she faced the approaching days of Marion's visit. "I might casually ask him to drop in during the days of her stay. Every time he happens along, he says something about seeing Marion at college. They'd enjoy singing together." A wan smile covered Virginia's face. "The last time he was telling me of the richness of her voice, the mellow quality that has been growing into depth. If I could see them together once, I believe I would know what she has seemed to avoid in her letters. Marion, Marion, I do love you, oh, yes! I do. Those words of Jeremy Taylor,—would that they were true of our friendship now! They might have been, but I have spoiled the opportunity. I know them by heart:—'By friendship, I suppose you mean the greatest love, and the greatest usefulness, and the most open communication and the noblest sufferings, and the most exemplary faithfulness, and the sweetest truth, and the heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of minds of which brave women are capable.' With Thy help, O God, I'll do all that I can to make it so, no matter what it costs! No-

body ever had such a friend and so selfishly abused the friendship. They say she has matured. How much more she improved than I did last year! She must be way beyond me now, and yet I am nearer to Christ, because of the prejudice she dispelled in me. I've made some advancement, but not enough." With a resolute twist of this last sentence, she wheeled her chair about till she faced her book-shelves and pulled out a well-worn volume of Robert Browning.

Finally the happy day arrived and two expectant hearts were keeping up a little livelier pace.

Early that morning, Elizabeth had met Marion going over to Main, and her face broke out into the cheeriest, broad smile. "Hello! and why are you laughing?" queried Marion.

"Why? It's just the reflection of your own dear face, Marion. I haven't see you so vivacious for months. Your color is up, and your eyes dance and — my! but you are pretty this morning!"

"Elizabeth, have I been so *passeé* looking these past weeks? Tell me."

"No, dear, not to other people. I haven't heard a soul mention it. Only this morning there is a change. Perhaps I see more deeply than others."

"I guess you do, for you are right. I am happy this morning. At noon I shall see Virginia, you know."

"I agree, that's enough to make anybody happy. She certainly is sterling. Has it ever struck you as curious that she has not been near college this year? She's only two hours up the river."

"Yes, it has; but then, Virginia was at Rochester most of the fall, you know." Marion had a dim intuition that Virginia's mood of the previous spring was connected somehow with her not wishing to return to Lansdowne; but what it meant was all a mystery.

"I'll miss you terribly, Mumsie, but have the very best time *what is*. I hope with all my heart the reality will work as great a miracle in your spirits as the anticipation is doing. I must go over to Clare's now, but I'll be around in time to see you off and carry a few of the band-boxes to the train."

Marion hurried to her room. "She's right! Something has possessed me. I haven't felt like this for a year, and I'm scared for fear it's going to leave me any moment."

There was a beautiful outlook as Marion was hurried along the banks of the Hudson. Inside, the merry-making that characterizes a crowd of college girls on their homeward journey for the glad Christmas tide was most insistent, and Marion was not averse to it; for it quelled a strain of homesickness that threatened her heart. Still she found spaces of time in which to press her face close to the car window and look out upon the winter scene,

glorious in its naked graces. The Hudson was frozen over, an unusual occurrence.

Its glazed, clear-cut outline curved up against the jagged, and bald precipices of the Highlands which in their turn were thrown into relief by the many leafless trees, varied now and then by the warm, green fir tree which caught up in its arms flaky bunches of snow. But she was fascinated by the lacy intricacy of the other trees where the snow had sifted easily from their filmy embrace. They were pictures beautiful in suggestiveness, — a silver sweep in the immediate foreground and then the grey majesty of the mountains rising a little farther on, and beyond and above that the brown fringing background, blending into the grey-blue sky. It was here that her imagination played in and out among the bending and weaving, the delicate tracing and branching of the monarchs of the Highlands. She loved to think of the painstaking variety and delicacy of touch in Nature's art, and she pondered often the character of the trees so wonderfully bare in their winter beauty. "Here it is, all in one picture — the broad strokes of the brush, and also the fine, delicate pencilings."

The next moment she was leading the girls in their favorite song — "The Youth and the Exmoor maiden," as some one called, "Start us off, Mary dear."

At the station, Marion found Virginia waiting to lead her out to a bob where were two of her

brothers: Billy, nineteen winters wise, and James, Jr., coming thirteen; besides Rose who had passed fifteen summers. "You remember there are yet two more, just by way of preparation for further introduction," laughed Virginia.

"Oh, yes, Miss Mansfield! Daddy has to count us every night when he lines us up on the stairway to send us to bed." Billy gave a flourish of whip and reins and the ponies were off with a bound that sent them all nodding vigorously. What a characteristic beginning for those two weeks!

"Yes, I'm as eager to know Allie and Irv as I was to see Billy and Rose and James; but I've been thinking that if the other contingency starts out as this one has done I shall have to get you all into one room and strike a bargain concerning something Virginia ought to have taught you long ago;" she shook her head saucily toward Virginia, "namely, to call me Marion, and to let me call each of you by your first name."

"That's what we do behind your back, Marion. I believe in being the same all the time," said James, Jr.

"That's right," encouraged Marion in the midst of the outbreak that followed.

Then corrected Billy, "Now James, son, you know very well we have been practicing to say 'Miss Mansfield' for the last two days; but you may be sure," and he turned to Marion, "it was only for a starter and first impression."

On they went, down the long village street, never stopping for its undulations which fortunately were well padded with snow. What an attractive ride that was! It was one of the two streets of the town of R—— that they swept along. Rural scenes greeted Marion everywhere. So many white cottages were set well back in roomy door yards fenced in various ways according to the taste of the owner; for all owned their homes in R——. Some had picket-fences, some hedge, others low stone walls.

“This is the business part of town but it is not complex; and we don’t have policemen,” suggested Rose with a sly twinkle.

Marion counted three stores, a post office, and a livery barn. It was to her a queer town and quaint simply because it was small. The station was at the eastern extremity of the principal street. Then came houses after which were stores then more houses, putting the “trading part” about mid-way.

“How far are you back from the river?” Marion asked.

“About six miles over to S——,” assured Billy. “We often *bob* over there. We have an ice-boat, and we’ll take you over to-morrow.”

“Yes, Marion, we expect you to be a good sportsman while you are here,” laughed Virginia. “The boys think it’s awful, if they miss a day’s

outing. You know it's rare to have the Hudson frozen over."

"I should say! We usually have to put up with Lake B——," authoritatively assured James, Jr. "It's just three miles west of us."

"This is delightful! How far do we go? I wish we could keep on and on." Marion put up her face to sniff in the crisp, invigorating air.

"Only two miles, Mary dear. Just a half mile farther."

"Sorry, Virgie; but then it's been a good brisk turn," and Marion settled back into the straw.

"What beautiful expanses all about! There is so much room to breath out here. I can imagine the pastures and ruminating cows in summer; 'Peace', the name of the picture."

"Oh, yes," was Virginia's amused response. "'Peaceful Slumbers' would perhaps be a better name for us the year around. We are very country-like as you observe. However we women do have a club," with mock seriousness.

"Virginia!" burst out Marion, "'we women!' Who ever heard anything so absurd. A rather sudden transition I'm thinking."

"*Apropos*; isn't it, Rose?"

"Yes, Virginia has settled down with the married women only she isn't married, and with no prospects. The club is traveling around the world this winter," answered Rose who in her keen,

perpetual prank-playing, typified anything but the passive beauty of the rose.

With a quick jerk that almost turned Marion over, they whirled into the long avenue of slender fir trees on one side of the Manning grounds.

"I don't wonder, Marion. You haven't turned for so long you have forgotten how it goes," chuckled chubby Rose as she caught the tumbling girl.

What a dear, old country home that was! Big and square and white with many generous rooms and sufficiently "porchy"! Marion had noticed that each of the sleighing party had taken a share of the responsibility of entertaining her, and when she met the motherly little Mrs. Manning and the large companionable father, she was not surprised to find the same hospitality. Even Alice with her reserved nature, a lass of seventeen, and Irving, the primary champion who told her that he was "going on" eight, had the same gift.

During those two weeks she lost herself in the life of that busy family where each day brought the spice of variety. She never could prophesy an hour ahead since the unexpected was always coming, but she was ever ready for it. The boys called her capital, while Alice said she was a queen, though Rose halted between the two opinions.

Christmas day was the star event. Marion afterwards told Virginia she had never seen its equal. It began Christmas eve. Immediately after dinner there began to be a stir of unrest. Irving kept tip-

toeing to his mother at short intervals to ask in a stage whisper, "Isn't it time to put the chairs out yet?" And James fringed about the room trying to look unconcerned, but yet consulted Irv, after he could stand it no longer, to know how long she had said to wait.

About seven-thirty, the mother gave in to Irving's entreaties, whereupon followed a struggle between Irving and James about who should place the chairs. The mother came to the rescue and divided the labors: James was to place the chairs, and Irving to print the paste-board cards because he had learned to print well at school. This appealed to his pride, calling forth his best efforts and also satisfying the itching activity of young James. Who can give sufficient praise to the mother of a large family who so quietly and wisely occupies her seat of arbitration, day in and day out, bringing peace and happiness into the little dominion? An outsider often admires, wonders, and is curious to know why she never grows weary in her office of mediator.

What a mysterious proceeding it all was to Marion! Virginia explained to her that the Manning family was so numerous and so helter-skelter that the mother had devised the plan of a row of chairs instead of a Christmas tree as the safest and most economical way of preserving order.

In due time Irving came forth with printed placards ready to hang on the back of the chairs

which had been placed in line with great precision by James. The first chair went all right; that was father's; and, of course, the second, for that was mother's; but the trouble was, who next? Virginia's chair usually followed because the chairs were labeled according to age. He stood pondering for a few moments, looking at Virginia and then at Marion, wiggling over on the side of one foot and then on the side of the other foot. His perplexed frown gradually changed to a sheepish, self-conscious grin when he perceived the amusement creeping over the faces of his mother and Virginia and the others who were watching. Finally his head dropped to one side as he said: "But mother, I don't know where to put Marion. Shall I put her here or there?" and he pointed to the two chairs in question.

"You shall be saved the embarrassment of asking Marion her age," helped out his sister with great difficulty controlling her feelings to spare those of the child. "You may put me next to mother, and Marion next to me."

Irv's face lighted up. The burden was rolled from his shoulders, and he was ready to continue the business he had in hand.

After the chairs had been properly marked Irv disappeared into the dining-room, soon to reappear with his bundle of presents. Each package was carefully laid in place while the family were admonished over and over again not to look.

A little later James was taking turn distributing his assignments after constant reminders from his mother that it was his bed time.

Marion, too, was tingling with excitement. She told Virginia, as they retired, not to let her miss any of the fun, and begged a promise to be called in time in the morning.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of not waking up," laughed Virginia. "You heard father tell the boys that they were not to come down before six o'clock; but by five o'clock there will be a general tumble up there and then no more sleep for us poor mortals on the floors below. That is the disadvantage of having the brothers in complete possession of the third floor: they have full sway."

Early the next morning — though to Marion it seemed the blackness of the middle of the night — Marion heard a thud, and then another, and then another, after which a scramble followed interspersed with attempts at subdued conversation, though being subdued was only an attempt, not an accomplishment.

"Just wait a minute, and you'll hear daddy," prophesied Virginia in keen appreciation of what would follow.

The girls quietly made their toilets, for Virginia was not to let Marion be deprived of the fun that was on. "I never got up so early, in my life, I believe."

"Well, you might as well do so around the

Manning ranch, Christmas morning. Listen, I hear a footstep," and Virginia raised a warning finger.

"Boys, what did I tell you? It is not nearly six o'clock yet. There is to be quiet in this house, understand, till six o'clock. You have the whole family awake already. Not one step are you to come down till then, and you must keep quiet."

"All right, sir," came a subdued chorus of voices.

"Poor father! he has to make the same sort of little speech, year after year. I never saw such a good natured man," commented Virginia.

Somewhat later there was a concerted movement in the hall above, and again the masculine voice below said rather sternly the one syllable, "Boys!"

An absolute quiet followed like the hush after a storm.

"I think you'll see something, if you open the door and look up the stairway." Virginia turned to Marion with a spiciness in her suggestion that made Marion immediately follow it up. As she stuck her head out, what did she see but the three boys perched on the top step each with one foot stretched to the second step below. She slipped back into the room to ask in amazement what they were doing.

"Doing? Oh, that will come later! They are waiting for the town clock to strike six, and at the first sound of the bell such an avalanche will come

down those stairs as you never heard, and it will continue until they get to the first floor to see who beats. Then's when you want to be ready to hop out to see the race."

"And Billy with them?" asked Marion.

"I should say! He's the biggest boy among them, in more than one sense. Don't be surprised to hear some war whoops from him. How does it happen that you do not have any of these experiences with your two brothers?"

"Well you see, we have our presents Christmas eve. Then, too, Horace is much older than I am, and George quite a little younger so that the discrepancy in our ages disconcerts mischief. Goodness knows, George is a regular prank, but he is only one."

The critical moment approached, the stroke of the bell announced it, and then, such a down pouring! It was beyond description. Marion and Virginia were right at their heels, and the other sisters, too, were on the spot. Marion entered with the rest to take possession of her chair and was nonplused to see the things for herself from every member of the family. Something made her look behind her, and there she saw Mr. and Mrs. Manning standing in the door smiling upon the scene.

The gift that touched her most was a small bottle of cheap perfume tied with a bright colored ribbon with a printed greeting from Irving. She could have picked him up and hugged him except

for fear of his offended manhood. As he saw her looking at it, he sidled round and asked her if she didn't think it was nice. When she told him that it was beautiful, he agreed that he thought so too.

Afterwards, Virginia told Marion that Irving had a bank for his Christmas money. Beforehand he always talked over with his mother the people he was going to give presents to. He had said that he was going to remember Marion. When the mother suggested that if he didn't have money enough she supposed Marion would not mind it to be left out, he stood back a thoughtful moment with his hands in his pockets and then said, looking her square in the eye, "But mother, I want to; she's so far away from home she will be homesick."

"That settled it with mother," continued Virginia, "and Irv came home from town one day perfectly delighted over the purchase of that perfume for you."

The tears filled Marion's eyes as she told Virginia in gratitude all that the Manning family had been to her, and had brought into a very lonely heart at that season which is loneliest when one is far away from loved ones.

The two weeks seemed gone almost before begun. Jack Casey had come around once for a sing and left each girl in perplexity as to the other's heart. Nevertheless they were closer together than they had been in months, and each knew that the friendship had been making rapid strides.

Virginia had said, "One thing I want to tell you before you go, Mary dear: you looked so very weary when you came to us, but you are going away looking a hundred per cent better."

Marion's reply was true, "Oh, I am, Virginia! and so rested. You've done me a world of good!"

Upon Marion's return to college she found a letter she had been looking for — the reply to that desperate letter of the lone morning hour some weeks previous. It was in Ruth's hand-writing, and Marion began reading eagerly.

"My dear Marion,—It was a bit of surprise to receive the perplexed letter from you, but I am sure it is quite natural for some of us not to get the foundation of our belief laid until we have first handled many of its stones over and over, questioned their strength, their shape, their size, their composite, until finally we get the right sort of grip on the Corner Stone and hold it fast, until we know it to the depths of our own capacity. Then it becomes the power to help us fit all the other stones together in their proper places and to give us hope and trust in the belief that is to rest thereon.

"Dear, know your Christ as the head of the corner. For every hour you put on any critical study or scientific work, put two on your Bible. Continue much in prayer. Remember again that Christ is the Light, the Truth, and the Way. Remember that this Bible you feel so uncertain about

has been tested not merely by a few scattered people here and there, but by hundreds of generations. Let the whole weight of that sink into your mind, *generations*, dear! You know Voltaire's prophecy of a hundred years ago? 'In a century, the Bible and Christ will be things of the past.' Quite satisfactorily to himself and his followers he proved the strength of such a prophetic vision; but to-day we behold the blindness of this seer, for we are told that before his day the whole world had not produced six millions of Bibles while in this, the most enlightened hundred years that humanity has ever known, two hundred millions of Bibles and portions of Scripture have been the product of the press.

"Remember, too, Marion that our Bible is infallible in its teaching concerning righteousness but it asserts no claim to absolute accuracy in historic values, though every archaeological research is verifying historical points before thought to be erroneous. The purpose of the Book, however, is not to be an absolute history of peoples, except in the growth of spiritual things.

"Dear, it is an eternal foundation you are dealing with. Do it quietly and with faith that it will stand investigation. You will be stronger for this, if you are true. Do not take the temptation to lack of belief in these things as a disgrace to you. The disgrace can come only, if you are unfair or cowardly. Study the Bible first, then a few of

its defenders. I say a *few* because there is danger of putting more stress on critics than on the subject criticised. If you are loyal to your prayer life, I have not a moment's fear of your coming out all right. Stay alone with God for some time each day, even though you can't say anything. Listen, for He will doubtless want to speak to you. Prayer is not all one-sided, you know.

"I am loving you deeply, praying for you constantly and trusting you absolutely. I long to see you, and am looking forward to a day with you this spring, when I go back to New York.

"From one who understands and cares,
"Ruth Holman."

Marion soon saw the clouds clearing. Something had come to steady her. That letter was ballast to keep her poised. The following week she was true to the counsel of that letter—much in study and in prayer, until she began to wonder how she could have been so blind in some respects. Every day her heart turned in gratitude to God for the positive hold Ruth Holman had upon her life. It was to her that Marion could turn when her heart was crushed, and her pride closed to all other human help. It was the sympathetic, yearning love of her friend evidenced in the many little notes, sometimes only a page or a half page, coming often during those days that gave Marion courage and prepared her quietly

one day to go to her professor for suggestions of reading to clear her thought. The scores of college girls throughout the length and breadth of the country who with Marion could thank the Father for just such personal care from Ruth Holman during their suffering period of transition, would be many; but the right hand never knew what the left hand was doing and so this marvelous personal worker for God was weaving her own life into the very fiber of hundreds of the young women of our land. It was through her influence that Marion found her way to Professor R— in the early spring.

Putting Dr. Denney's book, "The Atonement and the Modern Mind," into her hands, Dr. R— brought to Marion the final clearance of her difficulties. How gladly she read on and on to learn that the biologist's explanation, her heaviest stumbling block, was so thoroughly physical that it left out entirely the moral consciousness of sin, a possession of humanity which she recognized could not be slipped out of the way. The Bible answered this. Again, she saw her weariness of mind melting away as plainly as in a mirror, when in the plea for the historical Christ as against the Christ of dogma for all ages, the thought was brought to her that "if the historical has no dogmatic content, it cannot be essential to eternal life." Eagerly she rushed on in her reading impatient to know all until her sense of God's justice in relation to righteousness was satisfied and in harmony

with the great love of His Son whom He allowed to be crucified, in the thought that "God should forgive, but forgive in a way that shows Himself irreconcilable to evil," and that His forgiveness was possible only through a supreme revelation of His love.

The peace that followed these turbulent days was truly the peace that passed all understanding. How curious it was to her that girls did not begin to come to talk over with her difficulties similar to her own until she herself was ready to guide them. In this she recognized the merciful and protecting love of her Father.

One day as she was taking a walk around the lake with a class-mate, talking with this friend concerning her doubts, they paused to hear "Little" Warren, singing, as she drifted in a boat all alone:

"I was a rhizopod, a protoplasmic cell,
I had a little nucleus, the same I loved so
well;
But now I am a man, by evolution's power,
But O my little nucleus, I miss thee every
hour!"

Both smiled, and Marion told her friend that "Little" Warren had announced to her that morning that she was at last free again. "I suppose," confided Marion, "that this is the sequence to her remark. She wouldn't tell me this morning from what she was free, but said she would do so later.

To put it in her own queer way, she said it had been simply tough, but she'd come out on top."

"Marion, you dear old mother-confessor, how many of us come to you! And now because of you I am ready to sing 'Little' Warren's song with a light heart." It was a forced little laugh, but after all a reasonably happy one that closed the girl's remark as she drew nearer Marion, who only pressed her arm and thanked the Father for Ruth Holman.

CHAPTER XX

A PERIOD OF DECISIONS

Fourteen months had marched on in the college course, and Marion's graduation was nearing. Everybody was fourteen months the wiser, some the happier, some the stronger, some the sadder, and all the older — even old Sol with his companions, the moon and the retinue of stars.

So many weeks, months, and even years of a life often have to be spent in waiting. One can't see beyond the curtain that falls at the close of each day. The waiting days are tedious and a drag to the impatient, impetuous, and headlong aspirant who is easily winded in his climbing; a time of waste to the one without hope and without faith as he drifts along and loses what little vigor he had when he started — the man who lives on the level; a period of dead weight to him who is looking for a perpetual series of crises, and calls it not worth living till he can be on the billows where to his amazement he goes down at the first toss; and a season of preparation to the one who recognizes

that growing throughout the world is a slow, day-by-day, noiseless process, which is making the life to endure, to move steadily forward and upward, to count the little things as the best fortification for the occasional big things. This is the one who learns his place in the world and is content to fill it instead of the place of his neighbor. It has been the growing men and women who have led the world on nearer and nearer to the feet of its Creator. It is theirs to have the deep, pure appreciation of the happiness that is given them.

Virginia Manning had accepted the year of uncertainty as her portion and opportunity to develop faith in God. If it was hers to suffer, it was also hers to sympathize. She had taken her place here and there in the little village, and found a life of monotony changing to one of interest. People talked of her development, and their pleasure in having her about, while her family found her their comfort. She was marking the lapse of time, that May morning, and thinking over the many little things that had crowded themselves into her busy year when Alice came over to the summer-house where Virginia was and handed her out some mail. First of all there was Marion's graduation invitation and an enclosed note full of plans for Virginia's being with her. Then there was a note from Jack Casey. It sounded a bit unusual to her, though she didn't know why; for, as she read it over again, she could detect nothing definite. It ran, —

"My dear Virginia,—I am wondering if you are going to be at home this week, say Friday. If so, I should like to run up to see you. If not too great an inconvenience to you, may I hear from you right away?

"Yours cordially,

"Jack."

She looked out over the pretty garden for a moment and then once more glanced at the note. "I know what it is," she mused. "For the first time he is not on his way to or from somewhere, but is, to all appearances, just coming here. He seems rather anxious for a reply, too. It sounds important. I wonder if anything has happened."

She sat thinking for a while. She knew her love for him had made her more unselfish, and caused her to depend more upon God, had put richness into her heart, had made her more ready to understand one or two of her village friends the past winter, and had fitted her to be a help to them; she was content. Each visit he made was a new test to her, and sometimes she had feared she was almost a coward for wishing he didn't come; but she had steadily grown, and to-day the note brought no quiver of dread to her heart. With a calm, clear hand she wrote him that afternoon that she was glad to be at home Friday, and would be looking for him.

For the next two days Virginia went on with

her round of home duties, the companion to her mother, and the comfortable counselor of her brothers and sisters in their varied perplexities; but at the leisure moment, again and again, the thought would slip in: how curious that note was. Then she would tell herself, "But I'm not afraid; God has been good to give me these months in which to become quiet. If I can help Jack in any way, how glad I shall be."

When the family heard that Jack Casey was coming, there was a general shout of approval and anticipation, for his arrival always meant a grand celebration. Irv was going to take him out to see his pigs, to pass judgment on what they would bring in New York. James, Jr., had a new electric motor arrangement that wouldn't quite work, and he knew Jack would see through its trickery; Alice was going to have some good music for once, while Billy had some college problems to discuss with him. So each had plans. Virginia alone was without plans. Whether Jack Casey had any or not was another question.

The train arrived about three in the afternoon. The family were all at home. Not one could afford to miss Jack. Virginia was looking especially pretty and womanly when Jack drove up into the yard with a fine span and carriage. After greeting the family, to their disappointment, especially that of the younger members, he turned to Virginia and said, "It's a perfect day, and just the right part

of the afternoon for a drive. Wouldn't you like it? It seems good to a poor city fellow to get out among the fields, though perhaps you don't relish them so much."

"Oh, yes! I'm always ready for a drive," and in she climbed quickly, and as unaffectedly as though Billy had come along and had said, "Hop in!"

For awhile Jack didn't say much, though she chatted on easily to encourage him to make any confession about Marion or any requests for her own co-operation. He was positively awkward and didn't always appear to hear what she said, for his answers shot far from the mark, but she was magnanimous. She, too, had known what it was to be in such trouble as to be absent-minded.

The fields were full of promise, and everywhere the fresh greens were springing into fullness of life. The smells of spring time were good, and life was merry and busy. Every living creature seemed happy, but Jack Casey, and he of all was the last one Virginia ever expected to see miserable. There was no laugh, no clever joke to brighten the hour. Finally she gave up trying to carry both ends of the conversation, and rested back in her seat, looking away over the country. They rode on till they turned the next corner without a word from either, and then Jack made his start. One might have thought he was half-brother to Atlas, judging from the effort he put forth.

"I asked you to go driving with me this afternoon because I wanted to talk with you alone." He faced her.

"Virginia, I'd rather face a whole regiment than you."

She couldn't help being amused, and she was thoroughly puzzled. "Why, Jack? I'm not an ogre. What have you done?"

"That's what I'd like to know. What have I done, that I dare to come to you this afternoon. But I've put it off as long as I can stand it. I've got to say it."

She crimsoned. A faint glimmer was making its way to her.

"I shall not be offended, if you tell me to get out of this buggy and walk to the station while you drive home in righteous indignation."

At this she burst out laughing. She wanted to encourage him, but she didn't dare for fear she might be mistaken.

"The fact is, Virginia, I love you and love you desperately, and I'm a fool for ever hoping to have you care the smallest iota for me." He didn't even look at her when he said this, but looked steadily ahead, almost as if he were talking aloud to himself.

She made no reply, and after several moments he turned to find her staring directly in front with her eyes brimful.

“Virginia, I don’t understand. Have I hurt you? What can I do?”

She simply and trustfully gave her hand to him.

“And this is my answer?” His voice was husky.

A slight pressure from her hand, and he knew.

The strain of the awful uncertainty gave way, to her dismay, and she lost control. She bowed her head in her hands and then uttered a whispered prayer of gratitude to her God and a plea for quiet. Jack waited serenely and unobtrusively. As she looked up to him with the calm joy in her face, he drew her to himself for an instant. The depth of each heart was stilled in the sacred realization of that which each had so long craved.

It was after mutual understanding had brought its peace to both and they spoke frankly of this love, that Virginia said, “I was wholly unprepared for this, Jack.”

“That’s curious! What did you think I was coming up here all winter for?”

“You were always on your way, and stopped off between trains.”

“Rather a farce, I guess; I don’t mind telling you now, dear.” He looked up and smiled.

“And then I thought it was Marion you loved.”

“I did, too, at the very first; and then I got into an awful state going constantly to Lansdowne,

not knowing which girl I wanted to see more; but at commencement, last year, I knew it was you."

"So long ago as that?"

"Yes, I think of Marion as a sort of sister, especially so since I was in her home; then too, you two are so near each other that she is dear as a friend, not only for her own true self, but also for you."

"We'll tell her at commencement. You'll go down, won't you? She shall be the first to know, my own Mary who has pulled me through so much, — the very first, next to father and mother."

"That's good! I'm glad! She certainly pulled me well through once," laughed Jack as visions of Mohonk swept before him.

Virginia knew that night, within her own heart, that she had more to give Jack Casey because of the struggle Marion had made her face, and she was grateful that she had not been allowed to give her old self to him.

Commencement days were fast coming and while Virginia was busy with preparations in her own little corner, there was still more of a hurry and settling up around the college regions. Elizabeth had just come out from her last examination, and was standing on the steps of Helen Gould Hall thinking, "It's all over! What next?" when she felt a twitch at her elbow and turned to find "Little" Warren.

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't know; why?" was Elizabeth's answer.

"Come and take a walk with me. I'm tired and want to get out."

"All right. Where shall we go?"

"Oh, way off."

They started on back of the college, going across the fields and into the little wood near by.

"Here's a good place," and "Little" Warren casting her note-paper to one side threw herself under a large hospitable tree.

Elizabeth sat beside her, and after a few moments "Little" Warren asked, "What are you going to do next year?"

"I don't know; I wish I did."

"Have you ever thought much about Association work?"

"Yes, a good deal, but I don't see my way clear for that yet. I suppose I'll teach."

"Would you go into Y. W. work at once, if you could?"

"Yes, but what are you asking these questions for, 'Little' Warren?"

"I'll tell you. You know I had a long talk with Miss Holman when she was here last fall. It did me more good than anything I've had in my life. She made me feel that my talent or two which I had been depreciating all these years, had been God given. You see I had been calling myself a ten-cent man. She didn't exactly put it that way, but that was what it amounted to. She

showed me that if I continued to rate myself as a ten-cent man, sure enough that was what I'd turn out to be, and by so doing cheapen God's gift which I had no right to do; for His gifts are always good till man gets hold of them and thinks he knows more than God about them and so spoils them. Why, Elizabeth, she made me know that every living soul has something entrusted to him, and that the difference between man and man is in the way each appreciates his gift and uses it. Well, sir, that talk just took all the starch out of me! and pardon the expresion, but I looked to myself like the most conceited fool living when I had been thinking I was the most humble. To think I dared set my judgment up and criticise what He had given me! I confessed it all, and told her I wanted to have a share in Association work and that it irritated me because I knew I was not fit to be a worker. She told me that I was clear off; that my keen appreciation of the work brought its obligation to me to share in it; and then she explained that a person did not have to be a secretary to do Association work. Well, she spoke of various ways in which that might be true. I had an idea strike center about then, and asked her how the secretaries were supported. I thought if I could only get a substitute — and then she said that often some one took a secretaryship. Something made me think of my writing; I told her how kind the instructors had been in saying nice things about it, and then she had

a plan as she always does. As a result she introduced me in a personal way to one of the strong magazine establishments, after she had seen some of my stories. Well, the short of it is they accepted several. I've been sending them in all winter, and this spring they asked me if I wouldn't like to furnish a serial story next year. They made me a good offer and I said 'Yes'. Remember that this is all a profound secret." "Little" Warren held up a warning finger.

"Yes, I will," came in so low a voice that "Little" Warren could scarcely hear it, for Elizabeth's heart was beating so wildly that she feared it would announce its own perturbation.

"Well, to continue; I have quite a little toward my pile for my first year's secretaryship, and with that serial I'll have enough. Miss Holman has been so good as to encourage me with her letters all year, and I asked her about you. She said that she had hoped you would become a secretary and had talked with you about it. Now what I want to know is, will you let me work with you?"

By this time Elizabeth could no longer conceal the trembling that possessed her. She could make no reply. She arose and walked away for a few moments.

When she came back she was quiet. "Warney, I don't need to tell you in words of my depths of appreciation of your offer. It would be an untold joy to work with you in this way. I would

love the companionship with you through our work, but it is too heavy a burden for you, dear. I know what it costs, and it's too much for one little school-girl, just out of college, to undertake this her very first year. I'll teach a while. I've expected to do so and I am ready to wait."

"No! now don't disappoint me, Elizabeth. I've tested myself for the last seven months, and I know what I can do. This money can all go into Association work, for I need none of it for myself. I have enough business about me to come out all right at the end of the year."

"I'd trust you for that, Warney. You have one of the best business heads I know of. But I would have to go to the Institute for training, before I could take any sort of position.

"Yes, but that would be only for a year, and we would use some of the money for that."

Elizabeth flushed, "I can't let you give me my training, too."

"Little" Warren sat up and looked at her a second. "Why not? My confidence is in you. You're the best investment I can make in my Father's service. You can do what I can't, and it is not all one sided. I am allowed to do some things which are not for you. We just go into partnership, that's all."

How carefully "Little" Warren kept from letting Elizabeth feel it was something she was bestowing upon her! How vigorously she guarded

against Elizabeth's counting herself under obligation!

After further discussion, "Little" Warren at last won from Elizabeth the promise that she would do it, if Miss Holman thought she was capable and ought to do so, and if she could gain the prayer-response.

"I'm not afraid on the score of Miss Holman, because I know her sentiments; and as for the other, it will come in due time." Thus "Little" Warren closed the compact.

They walked back to college arm in arm, two earnest, noble young women, who had made the best of a wonderfully fruitful partnership and laid the foundation of a friendship to last throughout the years.

Those next days of the senior vacation — how they passed, Elizabeth but dimly realized. She was full of mental readjustments. The future had been most unsettled for her, and now a plan for life had brought to her very door that which she had so fervently desired and had thought could only be gained by several years of patient striving. Marion had been one perpetual, dancing sunbeam in the new enterprise, administering confidence and courage to Elizabeth in doses varying in size according to need.

She was beginning to establish somewhat of an equilibrium when a most unforeseen event occurred. It was within two days of commencement week.

The precious, senior vacation was vanishing, and Elizabeth was feeling lonely at the thought. All her friends were looking forward to having their families with them; she had no family, absolutely nobody to ask. Of course, Marion's family was nearer than any other but it was not her own; and, after all, she knew none of its members so very well except Marion. There was a suspicious moisture in her eyes when Marion burst in upon her with a telegram.

"Oh, Elizabeth! You know I thought Horace couldn't come at all, and here he says he'll be in this afternoon. I am so happy, and so surprised and full of wonder! I have to meet with the Choral Club to-night at six-thirty. Will you take care of him?"

"Yes, of course I will! What do you want me to do?"

"Oh, take him out around the campus! He has never been here. Go up to Sunset, and give him first impressions."

Elizabeth had not felt at all like visiting that day, but she resolved to do her best for Marion's sake. When the brother was handed over to her that evening, she found she had worked herself up to a fairly chatty mood.

Marion finished her work with the Choral Club and went over to the Senior Parlor, expecting to find Elizabeth and Horace waiting, as she herself was later than the time she had appointed to meet

them. It was a surprise to her to find the parlor deserted and to be able to read several short stories before they appeared. As they came in, she saw that something beyond the ordinary had happened in the life of both. Each face had its tell-tale marks. As they joked together and visited for the rest of the evening, she tried to trace which way affairs had gone, but she was baffled. There was an understanding in Elizabeth's eyes; and while she was not exuberant neither was she ill at ease, one of which extremes Marion would have expected. She was simply a calm, womanly woman. Horace as far as she could discover had greater penetration, and gentleness of manner; but this she at once attributed to another cause: a more personal knowledge of Christ. All winter long his letters to her had been a real source of comfort and support, coming as he had to understand her and the crisis in her past life. "But then he is not the same brother I left two hours ago; he has a different grip on things, somehow." So her thoughts took a separate trend from the conversation, groping in the dark for further evidence.

Several times in the evening, once in the midst of song, Marion put all conclusions aside and said to herself, "I'm really glad brother is going to New York to-night and will not be back until next week, for then I'll know all because Elizabeth will tell, I'm sure of it. Oh, I hope it is so! But what of 'Little' Warren and the Association?" This un-

dercurrent of thought held her until it threatened to spoil the consecutiveness of the conversation, a fact which frightened her into putting speculation absolutely aside for the present; but back it came with tremendous force when Horace bade them good night.

That curious something she felt again to a marked degree as he turned to Elizabeth,—even in the way he took her hand and said good night. Their eyes met for an instant speaking a momentary message that they alone understood. He quickly and tenderly kissed Marion and was gone.

Elizabeth separated from Marion that night with but few words. To Marion's disappointment she had said nothing in particular of that evening's walk.

Elizabeth returned to her room, closed the door and locked it, shutting herself away from all. She deliberately placed a chair in front of the window, and sat down to look out upon the dimly lighted campus. Not a trace of nervousness had characterized her movements. It was for her to do some conclusive thinking that night. She had discovered herself in an entirely new light, and Horace Mansfield had quietly let her discover him in a way she had never dreamed. The promise of womanhood which he had seen two years ago in her girlhood was more than fulfilled. She sat there weighing in her judgment the next several years, and then in the silence of the late hours she dropped on her knees.

There was no distressing conflict in her heart. As she arose she knew what the next few years were to be and she was not afraid to face the future beyond that. The Father's hand was upon her.

Out of this night a richness came into the following years of Elizabeth's life — a richness that she had never thought could be possible. She afterwards recognized it as one of the means of equipment God had given her for service among young women.

Marion was much with Elizabeth. She saw a growing strength in her, but what she was privileged to know, she knew only from her own eyes, not from what Elizabeth told her. Neither Horace nor Elizabeth tried to conceal anything from her. They spoke of having taken a second long walk together, and afterwards were perfectly at ease in being together with her. Following the second walk again she waited, but again she saw only the same quiet attitude; and, as Elizabeth talked of her next year at the Institute, Marion realized that she must look to the coming years to unfold to her that which she so much longed to know now and to have true, if it were God's will that it should be true.

As Marion saw the change in her brother's life, the yearning in her heart increased for the one whom she still loved. She had been constant each day in her intercession to her Lord in Gene's behalf, but she had been under the necessity of

remaining absolutely ignorant of his whereabouts and his condition of mind and heart. At times her faith almost failed, but it renewed its strength as she drew near to God so that she continued steadfast. Horace had mentioned seeing him on the street now and then, and had told her that Gene had grown older. It sickened her to hear these words. She knew their meaning. She had not seen him for two years. Her family had spent the summer in the East and thus she and Gene had been spared a meeting. Something prompted her to send a commencement invitation to him. Somehow she could not pass him by as less than friend at this time. A note came from him that Saturday night before Baccalaureate Sunday. She read.

“My dear Marion, — As I am in New York this week, it will be a pleasure to me to come to Lansdowne if I may. I appreciate very much the friendship that prompted you to remember me with a commencement program.

“Always your sincere friend,

“Eugene Whitmore.”

It was a frank, sincere response that went back, telling him that she thought he would especially enjoy their class day exercises.

Another letter came that week causing some one else's heart to beat the faster, though not in the same way. It came from Ruth Holman to Elizabeth, telling her that she had found that she could

arrange to be with her and Marion at this happy time. She said she thought that Elizabeth might play that it was her sister who was coming, since Marion had a family numerous enough. What a beautiful surprise that was! The invitation from Elizabeth and Marion had followed Miss Holman out to Colorado. Little did they think it would be their privilege to have her. Elizabeth's heart turned in gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts, as she read between the lines of Miss Holman's note, and knew how that delicate, sensitive heart had realized a girl's loneliness on this occasion. She knew that one of the motives which prompted Ruth Holman to make the effort to be there was for the sake of brightening an otherwise solitary way. *Play* she was a sister! Ah, indeed she would!

Marion read of Ruth's coming with a feeling that a human support was being given her in order that she might the better be sustained in the unexpected test that had come upon her. As she finished Ruth's letter she said, "God has sent her to me as well as to you, Elizabeth. I told you that I was going to send an invitation to Gene; he is here in New York, and this is the note I received from him." She handed it to Elizabeth. "I feel stronger already now that I know she will be here." It was the first time that Marion had mentioned Gene in several months, except for the few words in regard to sending the invitation.

Elizabeth looked troubled, after she had read the note. "What are you going to do, dear heart?"

"I've sent him a note telling him to come."

"And then what?"

"Dearest, I see the anxiety in your face. You need not worry. I am just as true and firm as I was the night I saw him last. I don't know what made me send that commencement announcement. I wanted him to know I did not spurn him; that must have been the reason. I know him too well to believe that he will ever take advantage of this. I am surprised that he is coming, but he probably wants to meet me half way. You see he recognizes it only as a friendly courtesy. It is strange, all of it." She stopped and looked away. Then her eyes met Elizabeth's. "It will be hard indeed. You know my heart, Elizabeth," she said in an undertone.

"Ah, I do know, Marion. God has truly sent Ruth Holman to you. My prayers and love are yours. I hold you in my heart as none other. I've seen that you know the something that has come into my own life these last few days to help me understand you."

Marion's eyes gave reply and she left the room. Two years of waiting and discipline! They had not been a waste; she was stronger and nearer her God. She, too, had grown older, much older than two years would warrant. The greatest blessing that had come to her these years had been that she

was being used in her family. She had a firmer hold on them than ever before. Her two brothers had taken a positive stand for Christ, and her father and mother had come to her point of view. Not one twinge of suffering could she regret in the face of these facts. How about the one whom she held day and night in her prayers? Would the next days reveal to her the answer?

Those months of importunate prayer! What of them? for Marion had been for months on a battle field for Eugene Whitmore. He had thrown himself into his business with all the energy he possessed, often working late into the night. He saw prosperity doubling, tripling, upon his hands in return for his efforts, but it brought no satisfaction. Through it he would have increase for alleviating the oppression of his burdened neighbor, he had said; but even this brought not the promised relief. Each day was like every other day, a monotony. Rising early, it was eat and work, eat and work and then to bed. He had always believed that work was the redemption of any man — work to harden the sinews of your character, work to accomplish, work to help the next one to you; but he could not prove it now. He had put this basic principle of life to the severest test and it had failed. At the close of a twelve-month, he was none the stronger, none the happier, none the more capable, except in a mechanical way. The older men, looking upon him as a master-hand, rejoiced

in his keen foresight, his solid judgment, and relied upon his manhood. They cared to have him in their company. They did not conceal their admiration, but he saw not their delight. His own kindliness of heart always prompted him to give pleasure and comfort to those in whose presence he was, but for himself he got nothing. A wearying restlessness which pervaded his whole being found vent in the long business trips that were forced upon him. From north to south, from east to west he traveled, but still he was beating the days out one by one. His philanthropy took a new form, and in addition to the stray city fellow, he extended a hand to the college boy who was struggling. He had helped several the opening of the second fall. They turned to him as their elder brother. He counseled, encouraged, guided, but there was a bitter acknowledgment in it to himself: he could point them to the upright life, to make men of themselves, but the words, "The blind leading the blind," would thrust themselves upon him.

Nights of wretchedness and days of exhaustion he spent till an early November Sunday of the second year when in Denver he chanced into a church, attracted by the music as he was passing by. He could not recall the last time he had attended service, but he found himself walking up the broad stone steps, irresistibly drawn. The singing brought its message of calm preparation in the house of God. Reverently he listened. He was lost

in the influence of the hour. Dr. Black came forward in the pulpit. His presence was a benediction: a man about sixty-three years of age, smooth-faced, with hair only grey—not yet bordering on the white—rather slight of figure. But this does not describe him! His smile was like light upon his face. His gracious spirit, fatherly love and tenderness drew his people to him in trust and confidence. His sympathetic touch was evident to the most casual on-looker who might stray within the doors. His people's responsiveness was no less evident. His text was, "Seek the things that are above." His emphasis was from that same third chapter of Colossians, "Christ is all and in all." His thoughts were so deep that they administered to the hunger of the most mature and troubled heart, but at the same time so simple that a child could grasp them. His own child-like faith brought convincing evidence to all that he said. After being seated, Gene had scarcely stirred. There had been no consciousness of the passing of time. He was startled at coming suddenly to the close of the service. Somehow, during that hour a weight had been lifted, but he sickened at its threatening shadows descending upon him again. The kind Dr. Black had asked to see any who cared to talk with him in his study at the hours appointed on the bulletin. During the hymn, Gene glanced at the bulletin in his pew, and saw that the time designated was Monday from two to four o'clock.

A half inclination came over him to come back the next afternoon. "But what should I talk about?" was his inclusive conclusion, and he turned away.

But all day that fatherly face followed him. All day those words of Dr. Black with their clear-cut truths, their consecutive reasoning stayed with him. His failure of the past months, his own inner dissatisfaction, together with the experience of the previous day, led him to the decision which brought him to the church study Monday afternoon. A casual observer might note it as a most extraordinary procedure for Eugene Whitmore to consult a minister about his own spiritual welfare; but one who knew his habit of thought would have expected no less under present conditions. He was a man of decision. His character was such in its training that as facts presented themselves to him in their bearing upon his affairs, his life, he took them honestly and acted accordingly. He correlated quickly, drew conclusions accurately, and marked out his course unflinchingly. So it was that he did not waste time, and tarry over his decision in regard to this interview. Dr. Black had what he himself did not, and what he believed to be a logical possession for every one who lives honestly; namely, a sense of inner satisfaction and certainty concerning his life principles. Dr. Black had offered to show the light that he had on the matter. Gene believed the man, and it was his opportunity to test the principles and to accept them, if they ap-

pealed to his own mind as right. Never before had he found the one to whom he thought he could turn with such trust in the honesty of his spiritual conclusions, but also, perhaps never before, had his own spiritual eyes been so cleared by hard experiences.

The pastor was alone when Gene called. Whitmore was absolutely fair with the one to whom he came, telling him his own mental attitude, his heart dissatisfaction, and the consequent confusion because of their lack of collaboration. For this reason he had come to him in whom there seemed to be harmony. Dr. Black, an experienced reader of human nature, saw that he had before him a man of action, not a man who would dilly-dally along the way when he had a clear vision, and a man who suffered keenly, if thwarted through being in the dark; so he laid down briefly a foundation that marked the clear difference between the realms of reason and those of faith, and the dishonesty in making the one do the work and reach conclusions for the other. On they talked, till they were at the foot of the cross, and then were standing before the Garden tomb that Easter morning where they together faced the most rational faith which the world has ever known. The two men, with bowed heads, knelt in personal communion with that third One who stood before them as in the days of old after the conflict and said "Peace, be unto you!" Eugene Whitmore's life that day embraced eternity.

Could Marion have looked into the next six months of his life, she would have known what the new vision meant to Gene. This man of action, as Dr. Black had rated him, no sooner received than he began to give. That first Christmas Eve he gathered into his apartments some thirty news-boys, his special friends, where he had a Christmas tree and a royal dinner, after which he read them the poem *Bethlehem*, and talked to them of the meaning of the coming anniversary. Before long he had them in a Sunday School class in St. Mark's Chapel. Their General, as they called Gene, had so completely won them that they made themselves aggressive in his behalf by bringing in recruits whom they found in street fights, or otherwise evidently in need of his services.

One Sunday afternoon, Jim, an old timer and ardent admirer of the General's, came up to Bob, a new comer seated on a dry goods box in the alley around the corner from the Chapel, and smoking a stump of a cigar which he had just picked up: "Hullo, Bob, come 'long! Time for class!"

"Naw, not to-day; got to finish this," drawled Bob.

"Didn't y'u like 'im, last time?"

"Y-a-s; good 'nough."

"Well, you just bet he's coming all the way from Denver to-day to he'p us fellers, and we ain't goin' to dis'point him. I guess you'll just come 'long too." With this he gripped Bob by the col-

lar, tumbled him off the box, and marshalled him to Sunday School against the ineffectual efforts of the captured. Many a time had Gene taken a weary trip half way across the continent in order that he might keep his appointment with them. And this was a part of real living. So the days went on, but always with the growing hunger for Marion. Had he lost her love, he questioned?

— It had been Gene's firm purpose to tell Marion of the change that had come, but the opportunity did not open till the invitation for commencement was received. Then the Tempter approached and would persuade him that such a course would be weak: Christianity a means to his end to gain her—that was easy! This thought touched his pride, and he shrank from following such a course. It almost stifled him to think that perhaps she could never love him again. Pride, it is tender, and yet self-assertive; vulnerable, and yet, so walled in reserve! But all this he recognized in a moment as false reasoning and cast it aside almost as quickly as it had come. However, it was a warning to him, and made him not only assume absolutely nothing, but also allow himself to expect nothing. As an honest man he owed it to her to recognize her leading him on to the True, and to thank her for it; he would not go beyond this. She had proffered him friendship, and that he accepted gladly.

Gene came to Exmoor the evening previous to

class day, and Marion and Horace met him at the college lodge. It was a pleasant evening, absolutely free from the embarrassment Marion had feared. She marked the firm, calm assurance in his face as if he had found life. There was a certainty about him that brought rest, and with it all a humility that won a belief that his decisions were fair and well considered, rather than rash assumptions. It was a balance, she told herself, that she felt in him. He kept a steady hand on the lines of friendship. There was no possibility of crossing the border. One who saw him from an interested point of view might have almost called him unfeeling. Marion was glad to see this immovability in him; it put her at ease and gave her freedom to ask him, without hesitation, to go with her in the early morning to see a bit of the campus.

As it was immediately after breakfast, they had most of the walks to themselves. What a morning that was! The fairies danced in the sunlight and played prisms with the dew-drops that bent every blade of grass. The new born day was slipping into life in the charm of its yellow sunbeams, which tripped lightly here and there in pleasant frolic with those same little dew-drops soon to be kissed away for the use of another day. The fairies would scurry off once more to their hiding places till the tiny, sparkling treasures again appeared and gave them invitation. Their merriment was at its height; the fresh, delicate June

beauty was nodding its welcome to the two quiet friends who stepped out into the open.

"Gene, what a perfect morning this is! Let us go out over the hill, yonder, to the fields. The daisies are the happy spirits around this region just now. I can see how fresh and cheery they'll look this morning, and then up there you'll get a good idea of the campus as a whole." Marion led the way down a pine path and over a pastoral bridge.

"It is kind of you to take me out, this Field Day morning. I feel as if it were an intrusion for me to accept, and I would not do so except that I am going back to New York, and this seems to be the only time for an uninterrupted talk with you, to tell you what has come to me the past year and to thank you for your share in it."

His voice was quiet and even. They came to the daisies swaying lightly, as the breeze drifting among them bent their tiny faces this way and that in saucy, rollicking fashion as if to defy any spectators who paused to look down upon them.

Marion laughed aloud, "Oh! do you see their bewitching spirit? It fairly possesses me!"

"I think I must have, and that is the reason I stopped a moment ago; my words weren't in harmony." A strained pause followed.

"There back of us, do you see the campus?"

"Yes, it shows to good advantage from here."

"And on farther we must go until you see

the Highlands. I think they may give a more serious background for what you were going to say."

They soon turned to face those serene, low-lying ridges as they stretched along the southwest horizon.

"Yes, I think it is here that I may say it, Marion."

His tone of voice suggested nothing of serious import concerning her, but merely a proceeding to simple facts.

"On the seventh of last November I drifted into a Denver church where I heard a sermon by Dr. Black. The next day I called at his study. I know now that you were the first one to point out to me, in any decided manner, the way to that study where I came face to face with my Lord Jesus Christ. Marion, I thank you with my whole heart for the unspeakable gift which you have helped to bring my way." Gene's voice broke. She listened, her lips tightening a bit in suppression of feeling. The great thing she had longed for with depth of earnestness, now that it had come, was almost more than she could bear. She knew not how to express herself. As she watched his deep emotion, his own reserve helped her.

"Gene, I don't know what words I can use to tell you what I want to. Never in my life has anything so rewarded and strengthened my faith as what you have just said. I can't thank you enough for this evidence of the answer to prayer."

“Ever since it came, I have known I owed it to you to let you see the power of Christ over such a prejudiced, willful subject as I, and I have also wanted to bear witness to the effectiveness of your co-operation with your Lord.”

“All I can say to this is, that I am most humbly grateful if He will let me be used with another in even so small a way in recognition of my eternal debt to the Master and to Ruth Holman, who made Him real to me. Ruth is here; I want you to meet her.

“Thank you, I’ll look forward to it.”

“Will you tell me a bit about what led you to Christ?”

“It consists of many dark pages; I fear I cannot give you the record; it is not pleasant to hear or to contemplate; but there were months of dissatisfaction, of uncertainty, of restlessness until I came to the place where I had to confess my own helplessness.”

She looked at him as he said those words and his face lighted, while she marveled because she knew so well this strong, stalwart, self-reliant man whose strength had carried conviction in its path. The wonder of it all was to behold the humility and calm acknowledgement of that which his pride would long have fought against in the past; and with the wonder was a new awakening love for him.

“It was just at this point,” he continued, “that Dr. Black came in. You had forced upon me my

own impotence, and he brought to me the power of Jesus Christ through whose help I could know what it was to walk upright, like a man, with confidence in my step and joy in reach of my goal, instead of with continual wobbling on to disappointment as I had done in the past. I've lived since then, Marion. I've known what you meant by those words, Peace and Happiness.

As he talked Marion could read the traces of the months and she was convinced by these that he walked daily with his God.

Quietly they stood for a moment, and then Marion looked up with deep love mirrored in her face. "I am so glad you told me and that you have supreme happiness; I saw it in your face last night."

"I would give anything I possess to repay you for what I owe you'."

"You owe me nothing, Gene! I was simply paying up or trying to pay up the debt I owe in doing anything in His name for you. Just pass it on; that is our message from Him." Her lips were saying one thing and her eyes another, and the last words of her sentence trembled slightly. Try as she would she could not hide from him the fact that there was something he could give her, something that all her nature yearned to accept.

Startled at the revelation, for no words or previous actions had betrayed her, he stopped and looked unflinchingly into her eyes.

The color left his face, and then he questioned. "Marion, have I read aright? Your words said I could give you nothing, but something else has disconcerted me, has denied those words, almost. In one respect I am the same that I was two years ago, but I did not come up here to-day to bring you wretchedness; I give you only what you care to have from me."

"I care for that which you care to give me," she answered with steadiness.

Again she was in his arms, and again he uttered that one word, "Sweetheart," but it was not the agonized embrace of two years ago, nor was it the feverish word wrenched from his heart. It was the lost word returned, bringing its gift from the Father, through whose Son had come their souls' union.

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